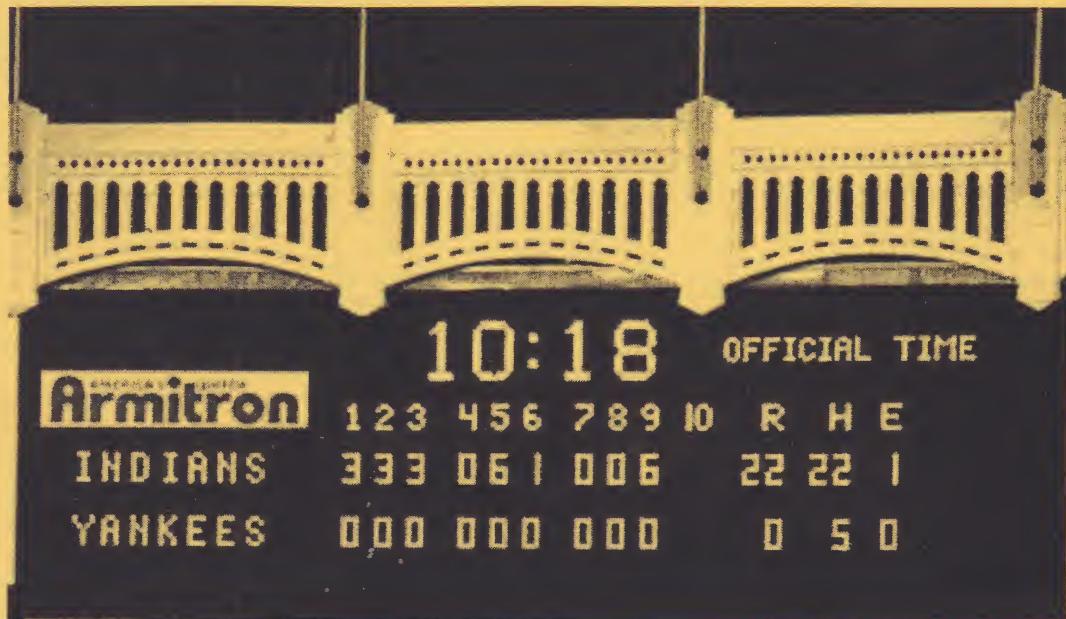


The Baseball Magazine For People Who Hate Baseball Magazines

Fall
2004

Z I S K # 9



The Best Score Ever!

It's the '70s again! Bill Lee and Charley Finley
The Red Sox, The Yankees, and Pretty In Pink

Great Debuts and Bad Trades
Sports Clichés and Myths of Place
...and more!

Z I S K

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Publisher's Note:

I'm only about 5% Scottish yet I'm one of the cheapest people in the world; thrift is a matter of pride. I figure the money I save by buying store brand dish soap and baked beans in bulk trickles into used books and 'zine projects—the things that really matter. It's called budget living, and I need not extol its virtues to you, the *Zisk* reader, for chances are you're a convert. I know the *Zisk* contributors are. Whenever we organize an outing to Shea everyone votes for upper deck seats.

But this spring I was offered a pair of luxury box seat tickets. To a Yankees game. I figured pride could be set aside—it's one of the seven deadly sins, right? No baseball fan, self-respecting or self-loathing, could pass up such a potentially memorable experience.

And memorable it was. While waiting in the lobby I got to see adult Yankees fans heckle 10-year-old Mets fans...

Thirty-something Yankees fan getting into elevator, to kid wearing a Mets cap: Hey, Mets fan, good luck!

Other thirty-something Yankees fan getting into elevator, to same kid: (Bends over, gets eye to eye with the kid, points to Yankee insignia on his cap) Don't worry about luck, kid!

So, yeah, there was the requisite ugliness that not even the fancy setting could mask. There was also the ridiculous service.

Yankees Fan Relations Guy, speaking to the guy sitting next to me: I'm sorry, sir, but, yes, batting practice has been cancelled due to the weather. You may go to your seats, if you'd like.

Guy sitting next to me: Will it be dry there?

Yankee FRG: Let's see, you're in row G. There may be a little residual mist there, not rain, but residual mist is possible.

Residual mist. Clearly, I'd set foot into a different world. But I'm here to apologize, not to list the lavish accommodations. I apologize because I did not kill **George Steinbrenner**. You see, after meeting up with my wife, we went up to the club level, and as we stepped out of the elevator we walked by Steinbrenner. I passed within six feet of George, and though he was flanked by lackeys, there were no barriers between us. I could have exterminated evil, removed baseball's biggest thorn, and I didn't. I'm shamed. Please forgive me. I offer this new issue of *Zisk* as the first in a series of acts of contrition.

That said, with the Mets painfully distant from the playoffs, let's go Dodgers or Cubs or Red Sox or Twins or A's!

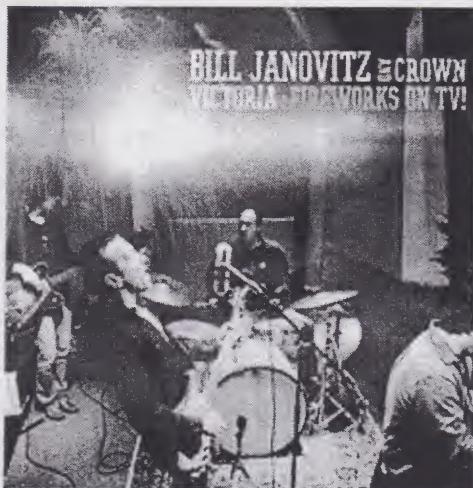
Mike

Rock and the Red Sox: Bill Janovitz and Boston's Two Obsessions by Steve Reynolds



In *Zisk* #8 we brought you a story about *Hot Stove, Cool Music* the charity benefit concert in Boston (which inspired an all-star album) that has very strong baseball ties. In this issue we bring you an interview with

one of the artists that has been a big supporter of that fundraiser, **Bill Janovitz**. The singer-guitarist is best known for his work with the Boston trio **Buffalo Tom**, but this September he put out *Fireworks on TV*, the first album recorded with his solo band **Crown Victoria**. He's also written music that was used going into and out of commercials for the Red Sox radio broadcasts on WEEI. And like one of the members of *Zisk* staff, Janovitz has been both a Mets and Red Sox fan (just not at the present moment).

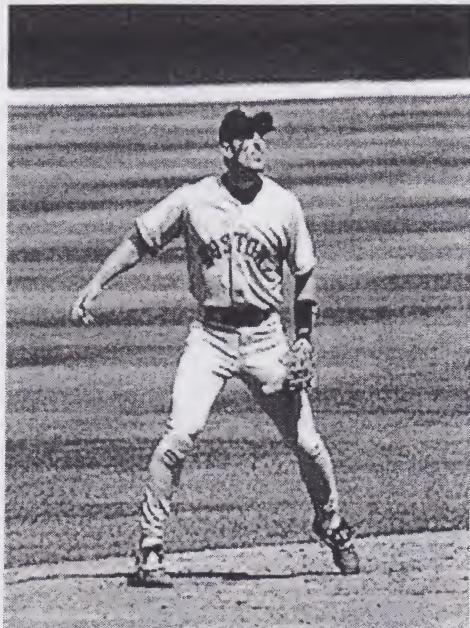


With all these baseball connections, Janovitz seemed like a perfect person to include in *Zisk*'s series of articles about musicians and baseball. So just before the release of *Fireworks on TV*, *Zisk* had the chance to talk to Janovitz about his other passion, baseball.

Zisk: So what do you think of the **Nomar** trade?

Bill Janovitz: How much tape do you got? (Laughs)

What do I think of the Nomar trade? I think it was inevitable, but I hated to see it happen. It was like a relationship that all of sudden comes to an end and you just go, "Wow, how did that happen? Why did it happen?" Nomar's a complicated guy, from



what I can tell. I met him very briefly a couple of times, so I can't speak from personal experience, but from what I can tell—and I know some guys that are on the daily Red Sox beat—and from what I can gather from all of these different accounts, he's just a really complicated, misunderstood guy, by no small fault of his own. I don't think he handled things extremely well, but in Boston—and I lived in New York, I grew up as a Mets fan—nothing, *nothing* compares to the media coverage of the Red Sox. Because we have one team in this town, and they mean almost everything to almost everybody. And it's just an impossible situation for almost every player that's played on the team. (Laughs) And it's a nightmare, so he couldn't handle it. I think his skills, here anyway, were diminishing. I think he'll have a renaissance wherever he goes—Chicago if he stays there. He's already shown signs of life. I just think it was affecting his play. And I think the Red Sox are better off without him. And I hate to say it, and I'm sad to say it, because I wanted to see him stay here. I want to see all my favorite players stay and finish their careers here, and I get emotional about it. And this current team is really still really hard to get a hold of, and part of it was because they had a revolving door of injuries this year.

Zisk: It seems to me that last year's team somehow connected more with Boston and New England in general



than the previous few years.

BJ: Oh absolutely, especially if you compare it to this year. Whereas this year they have all these dramatic late inning one run losses, last year it was 180 degrees

different, where they were coming back and winning these games consistently. They didn't play great consistently until September, but they had a lot of dramatics and they were really underdogs. And this year they were picked to win the World Series. And they had no injuries last year, so it was a blast to follow until the last minute. And then that last minute was just the most nightmarish situation, and it would have been that much more painful had it not been so predictable and inevitable. (Laughs) I had grown men, friends of mine, calling me up crying, like sobbing, and I'm not messing with you, I'm talking about *sobbing*.

Zisk: I believe that. I absolutely would believe that. I was up there [in Boston] the day after, and it was like walking through a city that had been to a funeral.

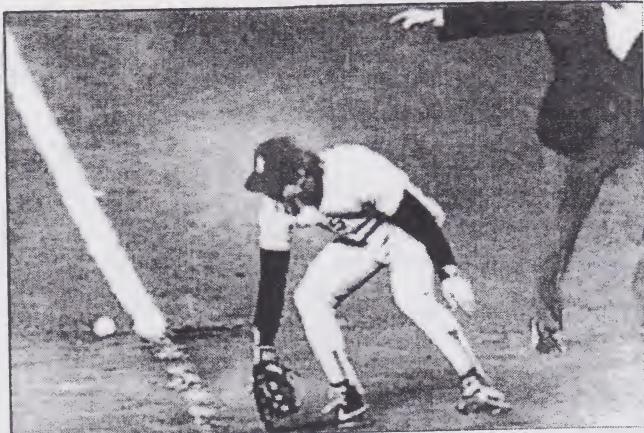
BJ: Were you up here? (laughs) What were you doing up here?

Zisk: There was a **Gentlemen** show that was the next day, and I was thinking the night before, "Wow, if they win, tomorrow night is going to be one of the greatest nights ever in Boston."

BJ: Oh, you're right.

Zisk: And I was like, "If they lose, it's going to be one of the worst nights ever." (Laughs)

BJ: You were right, it was a nightmare. Here's the thing—I was transitioning from being a Mets fan as a kid, to not caring at all, so I didn't even really care in the '86 series. I was watching at a pub in Northampton,



Massachusetts, going to school, and I was full punk rock, artsy guy at that time. Did not really care about baseball. But I watched it and thought how dramatic it was and could appreciate it, and if anything I guess I was leaning towards the Mets as I was only in Massachusetts for few years at that point. But I saw the devastation that that reaped on U-Mass's campus. There was literally like riots. But I don't think—and from everybody I talked to that grew up with the Red Sox—nothing compared to this, because it was just nuts, and that was it. It was the end. In '86 they had a chance to come back the next night.

Zisk: When do you think you transitioned to being a Red Sox fan? When did you feel like a true Red Sox fan?



BJ: I can almost pinpoint the moment, I just can't remember exactly when it was—it was sorta like '94 or '95. You know, I always watched the Red Sox and I watching them increasingly more as I got older, especially if we were around for summers during the Buffalo Tom years. We would go to these countries, we would be playing



a gig, and there'd be a World Cup thing and we wouldn't play. We'd have a set and just skip it because nobody would watch us. So we'd end up going on three hours late or whatever. And forget World Cup, just like important national games, and the countries were just shut down. And so you'd have all these rock and roll fans where sports would take the priority. It was sort of like *Fever Pitch* [Ed: a book about British soccer fans by *High Fidelity* author **Nick Hornby**]. And I gained an appreciation for that. I had a friend from Australia who was our tour manager for most of the years and he was full on into cricket. And he explained all the intricacies of cricket to us, so we got this great appreciation for it. And one time he was staying with me in Boston for a while and we had the Red Sox game on and I'm explaining the game to him, and I just had a newfound appreciation for what this game looks like to an outsider. And explaining it to him made me appreciate the finer points of the game that much more. And then I started watching regularly and got into the whole kind of local angle of it in Boston. I

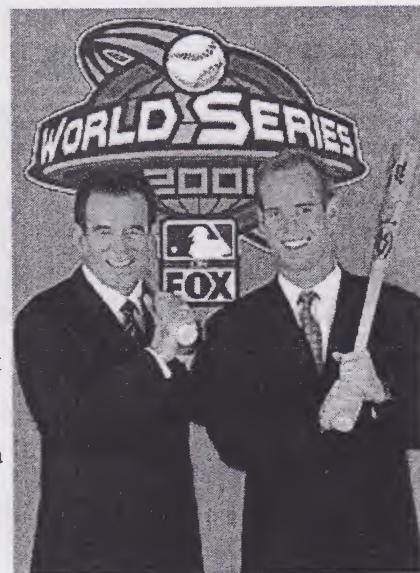
had been in Boston for long enough and going away so much on tour made me realize how much I loved the town. And I think it's sort of like that **Tom Waits** song, 'I never missed my hometown until I stayed away too long.' It's that kind of sentiment. And coming back home after a tour made me identify more as being a Bostonian, which is weird because I still kind of feel like an exile. I grew up in New York, I don't really feel like I'm a Massachusetts guy so much. So it's all that stuff and then in '99 my daughter was born, and she was born in the spring. So I had the night shift and so I watched every game that season and I haven't stopped watching almost every game every season since. So that's the arc of my Boston Red Sox fandom.

Zisk: I just got that digital cable baseball package this year, and so I watch a lot of Red Sox games now. That's a good thing considering how horrible the Mets commentators are. I'd much rather listen to **Jerry Remy** talk than **Fran Healy**.

BJ: Isn't Remy great?

Zisk: Yeah, it's a pleasure to listen to competence, considering how bad the guys are here in New York.

BJ: Yeah, and the national guys are awful too. The talk radio lines here in Boston are lit up the next day after a national game because they can't believe they have to sit there and listen to **Tim McCarver** and **Joe Buck**. Joe Buck is bad enough, but with McCarver it's like having a retarded guy calling a game. (Laughs)



Bill Janovitz and Crown Victoria's *Fireworks* on TV is one of the best albums of 2004 (at least in the opinion of the senior editor) and can be ordered at Qdivision.com or through Janovitz's website BillJanovitz.com.

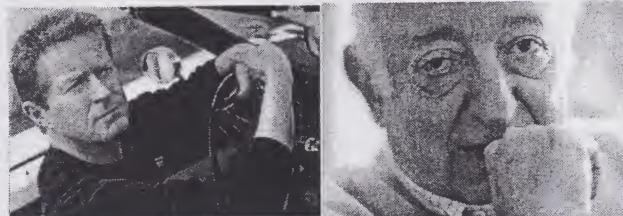
Duckie Nation:

Two writers and friends, one a Yankee fan and the other a Red Sox diehard, discuss the very nature of their disagreements through the lens of pop culture. By Dan Dunford and Ari Voukydis

“Springtime comes, and the leaves are back on the trees again.” So begins a relatively obscure song by Wilco side project **Loose Fur**, alternately called “Laminated Cat” and “Not For The Season.” If you think about it, it’s a wonderful sentiment for the Northeast, especially at what feels like the tail end of an excruciatingly bitter winter. However, said sentiment is followed by an afterthought of intriguing nature, as the next line of the song notes that, with the leaves back on the trees, “The snipers are harder to see.”

It’s as though the verse was written by the collective voice of the Boston Red Sox fan base.

The first sign of spring for many of us in the seasonally desolate Northeastern United States comes courtesy of baseball, when across this continent (and one city in Asia), the opening pitches of the season have been ceremoniously tossed from the outstretched arms of politicians. After all, to quote both **Don Henley** and



Roger Kahn, the players who participate in our national pastime are “the boys of summer.” If they’re playing ball, that means two things: summer is approaching, and Boston fans are filled with discontent and paranoia.



This year is no exception, courtesy of the New York Yankees’ recent acquisition of shortstop **Alex Rodriguez**. For those of you unfamiliar with Rodriguez and his recent saga, let me draw a parallel. Alex Rodriguez, this winter, was much like **Molly Ringwald**’s character **Andie Walsh** in *Pretty In Pink*: gorgeous and available. Ultimately, it boiled down to two

candidates for his affection and services: the honorable, yet geeky, **Duckie** (**Jon Cryer** in the movie, played in this saga by the Boston Red Sox) or the “hunky” **Blane McDonagh** (**Andrew McCarthy**/the 26-time World Series Champion Yankees). As in *Pretty In Pink*, the hunk gets the girl. But, unlike the movie, the geek had a real chance to score with the gorgeous girl in the baseball world—in fact, one might parallel what happened to the Red Sox to an alternate version of *Pretty* where Duckie gets into some heavy, heavy petting with Andie and even gets to see her imaginably perky nipples. Yes, folks, it was that close for **Alex Rodriguez** and the Boston Red Sox. They almost “did it.”

Cut to the next morning, and a sated **Alex Rodriguez** is smoking in bed—this bed is located in Yankee Stadium’s Monument Park, next to the **Babe Ruth** and **Lou Gehrig** plaques.

You’d view something as optimistic and beautiful as spring through the twin eyes of bitterness and paranoia, too, if you were a Red Sox fan. (I’m not, but I’ve been told that I’m pretty “empathetic” for a man, whatever the hell that crap means.) I mean, hell, you do everything short of lip-synching “Try A Little Tenderness” to try to get the prize, and you lose out to the hunk—every year since 1918.

To which I reply, well, so what. Ask any aficionado of **Reagan-era** teen cinema what they remember about *Pretty In Pink*, and the odds are good that they’ll talk about Duckie. Why? Well, it’s probably because Duckie carves out the



most resonant persona of the movie—in losing, ultimately, he wins the hearts of the viewer. Similarly, the Red Sox have created a dazzling history colored by failure and near-success, from the trade of **Babe Ruth** through the presumably soul-crushing **Aaron Boone** home run. Much like Duckie losing Andie to Blane in *Pretty In Pink*, the

Red Sox' failures in baseball have been colored by the successes of the archrival Yankees. One wonders what happens to Duckie after the credits roll on *Pretty In Pink*. I think it's safe to assume that he eventually did win the heart of some lucky girl, and probably managed to mold himself a remarkable life. Similarly, I'm pretty sure that the Red Sox might someday mold themselves into a champion of some sort or another, if they can only escape the shadow of the Yankees.

The kicker here, echoed in the last scene of another great '80s-era teen movie, *The Last American Virgin*, and the truths at the heart of any unrequited love stories of the era and beyond, is that this will probably never happen. Everybody loves Duckie, but he never succeeds while we're watching him. And, now, we look at Duckie, and see that his back's perpetually pinned to the wall—and that wall might as well be the 37-foot behemoth that stands in left field of Fenway Park. I have many friends who are Red Sox fans, and in a way, I root for them to someday understand the remarkable feeling that you get when your team wins it all. Despite my status as a card-carrying Yankee fan, I'd be the first one to call them and congratulate them if their team ever won a World Series. Ultimately, though, I guess I never expect to make that call. After all, the Red Sox are the human, baseball-based personification of unrequited love. Call them Team Duckie, and remember—if you, too, were doomed to a lifetime as runner-up, you would also see the leaves on the trees and think about hidden snipers.

Dan Dunford

Dear Dan,

I enjoyed your latest article about Alex Rodriguez and the New York Yankees vis-a-vis *Pretty In Pink*. I believe that Mr. Dunford was correct in his assertions, and for all the wrong reasons. It is a matter of public record that:

1) In the original script to *Pretty In Pink*, it is Duckie who ends up with Andie. That's how **John Hughes** wanted it. During the original screenings, however, the test audiences were creeped out by the "correct" ending because they felt it implied—to put it in a **Bushian** context—"class warfare;" that the Rich were evil and that Love, as an ideal, belonged not to the rich but to the Integrity Punks / Nerds. Thus the ending was changed so that Andie ends up with Blaine. If you don't believe me, look it up.

2) I am not making this up. This is a matter of public record.

3) With this in mind, rent *Pretty in Pink* again. The whole plot leads, inexorably, to Duckie and Andie getting together. The hastily added "go to him" part is obviously hastily added.

4) Duckie ends up with **Kristy Swanson**—not so bad, but not "what the founders had intended" as constitutional scholar **Larry Tribe** might say.

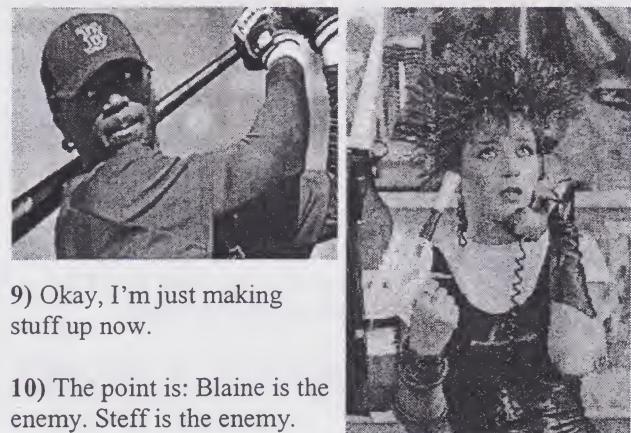


5) No man with integrity watched that movie and rooted for Blaine. Every guy rooted for Duckie. If you rooted for Blaine, you probably didn't see the movie in the theaters. Also, you're a douchebag.

6) The moral of the revisionist *Pretty in Pink* is that the Rich always win. Moreover, the earnest, punk rock working-class is reduced to flashing a shit-eating grin and settling for the vacuous consolation prize (Kristy Swanson as **Manny Ramirez**? Don't ask me, kitten, I only work here).

7) Let me ask this directly: When you first saw *Pretty in Pink*, were you rooting for Duckie, or Blaine? The Red Sox are Duckie. The Yankees are Blaine. **Steinbrenner** is **Steff** (James Spader's character). If you root for Blaine and Steff, then you missed the point.

8) **Pokey Reese** is **Annie Potts**.



9) Okay, I'm just making stuff up now.

10) The point is: Blaine is the enemy. Steff is the enemy.

The Yanquis are the enemy. Honestly, how long do you think Andie and Blaine really lasted?

11) This one goes to eleven: Rooting for the Yankees is like rooting for the House in blackjack.

Ari Voukydis

Dear Ari,

While it may be a matter of public record that Duckie was intended for Andie, and it may be at the heart and soul of everybody with half of a heart/brain who watches the movie to believe that Duckie belongs with Andie, it never

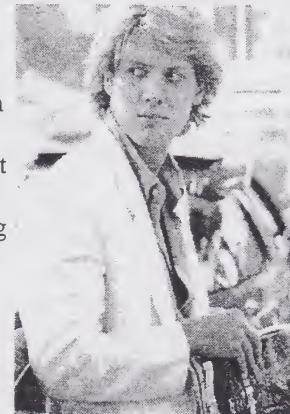


actually happens. Ask anyone who's ever seen the movie, which is the ultimate public record of *Pretty In Pink*.

I refer you, then, to the countless preseason predictions of writers over the years who, in their own hearts and first drafts (and regardless or not of their affiliation as a member of Red Sox Nation) scripted a season where the Red Sox won it all. I hate to point this out, but there have been several seasons where everything has been scripted towards the inevitable conclusion of a Red Sox title. Then, a horrible tacked-on ending spoils the whole thing. The weird little kink endings to seasons—the ones that have shattered your heart so many times that I hesitate to bring them up—don't they jibe all the more with the "hastily added" assertion about *Pretty In Pink*?

That said, did I—and everyone, really—root for Duckie? Absolutely.

And, if you rooted for Blaine, were you a douchebag? I think that's a little harsh—I'd go with "more superficial." What I disagree with is your contention of (paraphrase) "Yankees as Blaine, Steinbrenner as Steff." Here's why. It's never that simple. (Of course, you want to codify the parallels between *Pretty in Pink* and the Sox/Yankees Battle to make it so that the owner of the Bronx Bombers gets played by Professional Asshole James Spader. Well played, Voukydis.) But, realistically, we know that in this type of argument and relationship, we're never that removed from it. As fans of our team, we're not watching the movie objectively, we're living it. We are minor, background players, already allied. And, just like in real life, you go with what you know. If you're born and raised next door to Blaine, you're more likely to root for him—no matter what the objective reality of the situation. In simple terms, you get caught up. It's life, and it's living. If that means that the Yankee fan base (as opposed to George Steinbrenner) are a collective Steff, then so be it. That's how the cookie crumbles. But, remember, we're just looking after what we know. You would, too, if you were born "on this side of the tracks."



And, as hot as Kristy Swanson is—and she still is (see *Playboy* layout sometime last year, if I'm not mistaken)—she's the consolation prize. The ALDS Championship trophy, if you will.

While Andie and Blaine might have never had a wonderful lifelong companionship together, all we can bank on as truth is that they wound up together. In a John Hughes movie, and a John Hughes world, that's the ultimate form of currency. It's the end of the movie. When the screen fades to black, and the lights go on, that's how things are.

We love Duckie, and we root for him, and we see ourselves in him—and, for Christ's sake, there's true and tremendous honor in being Duckie—but his fate is sealed as soon as the movie ends, no matter what the original screenplay might note.

Dan Dunford

Dan,

My point was that your *Pretty in Pink* analogy is, in fact, perfect. Furthermore, in being perfect it underscores the inherent loathesomeness of the New York Yankees. Every time we watch the movie, we don't really believe in our hearts that the ending will magically change; that hey, this time maybe Duckie will get the girl. But though we know the story by heart, we still root for Duckie.

Again: we know he doesn't end up with Andie. But even so, we root for him. It would be amoral to rent *Pretty in Pink* and root for Blaine because hey, we know he wins and everyone loves a winner—even if the winner was determined, literally, by choosing money over integrity.

But you know who does that? Anyone who bought their first Yankees cap after 1996. Anyone who abandons their hometown Tigers (or whomever) and gets a Jeter starter



jersey and then yells "1918" at me on the street. The signing of A-Rod draws a line in the sand. If you were not a Yankee fan in the '80s, or at least early '90s, it is corrupt to be one now. One thing I pity about lifelong Yankee fans like Mr. Dunford is that they can never trust the company they keep: are the people in the seats next to me, behind me, around me real fans? Or are they the kind of mercenary poseurs who will root for nobody but the

Overdog? We Sox fans don't have that problem. If you jumped on the Sox bandwagon when they were winning Series after Series, you are very old and probably easy to spot.



The Red Sox Nation will always root for Duckie. It is our nature. And perhaps, this year, some new director's cut will be released and fans will get to see the movie the way it's supposed to end. I wonder: will the Nouveau Yankee Fans hide their caps, remove their blazers and ties, and claim they were with the good guys all along? What if the Yankees lose several years in a row? What if they lose 84 years in a row? Think they'll still be there? We will. The Nation will. The Nation is. Because the ship will one day be righted, the injustices corrected, the piper paid, and when that happens, a whole lot of Yankee fans—as Steff says to Blaine—"won't know whether to shit or go sailing."

Ari Voukydis

Dan Dunford is a writer and teacher who originally hails from the Bronx, New York. He currently resides in Albany, New York, where he teaches pre-school.

Ari Voukydis is a writer and actor born and raised in Boston. He currently resides in Manhattan, and is a C-list celebrity who can be seen on like a thousand VH-1 shows, including Best Week Ever, A2Z, Celebrity Smackdown, Get Your Geek On and All Access.

Myths of Place

When Jim Fassel, who was born and raised in California and had coached primarily in the West, was hired to be the head coach of the New York Giants, the *New York Daily News* wondered whether someone who was "accustomed to bikini weather and a pretty passing game would struggle with the elements of player discipline in the He-Man's land of the NFC East."

Boston Celtic Paul Pierce, an All-Star, by reputation one of the grittiest players in the NBA, and a native Californian, said, "The hatred for the West Coast player—it's everywhere. Especially in high school. When you go back East, it's always, 'the West is soft.' I can't tell you how many guys I got into it with over that. That probably has something to do with why no one had heard of me until the McDonald's All-American game."

Pierce's then teammate, Kenny Anderson, who was born and raised in Queens, told him, "Because there's no ballers on the West Coast like in New York, the mecca of basketball. That's why nobody heard of you."

Kenny Anderson was a high school phenom and a college star but has been an NBA journeyman; inevitably, it's the middle- and lower-rung players who cling to the badge of geographic superiority.

When Larry Bird, longtime Boston Celtic star, was coaching the Indiana Pacers, he said, "The East used to have the defensive powers. But with the new rules, scoring is up, and it hurts us. It's a softer game now, and the West always has had soft teams."

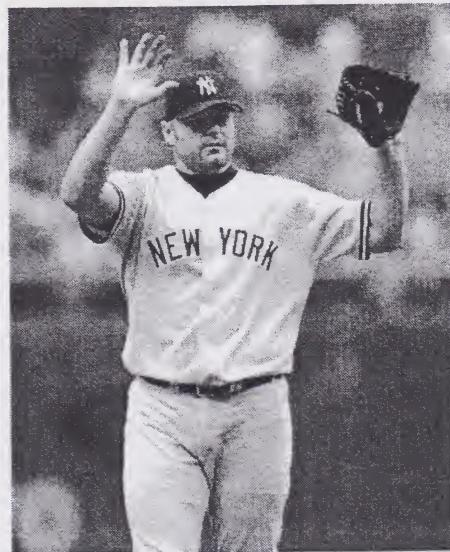
Jalen Rose, then of the Indiana Pacers, replied, "The West is about scoring and putting three or four guys out there who can actually put the ball in the basket. In the East, two guys might be robots."

The West is about pretty skills; the East is a manly scrum.

Texas Tech defensive coordinator Greg McMackin said, "The West Coast offense is a finesse offense that's built on rhythm. They dink and dunk in the short, quick, passing game so they can have third-and-short situations." After the Sonics defeated the Knicks in New York several years ago, Seattle's Sam Perkins said, "It's no problem for us being physical. We're not as soft as people say we are. We just don't have the reputation. We're not seen as

by David Shields

much on the East Coast. People think we just run and shoot. They don't really see how we are, until today."



Ex-New York Yankee and (current Houston Astro) pitcher Roger Clemens claims that he's "seen a few times in Anaheim where a guy is throwing a cool game and people get up in the fifth, sixth, or seventh inning and head for the beach."

The myth persists that West Coast fans always arrive late and leave early, whereas East Coast fans supposedly arrive on time and stay until the bitter end: they have true forbearance, persistence, stick-to-it-tiveness. In actuality, at lopsided games at Yankee Stadium, fans leave in the fifth inning, as they do anywhere else. When the Knicks are way behind, fans throng to the exits midway through the fourth quarter, the same way people do in the rest of the country. When the Yankees were bad during the 1980s, attendance fell dramatically; so, too, at Madison Square Garden, attendance is way down now that the Knicks are terrible.

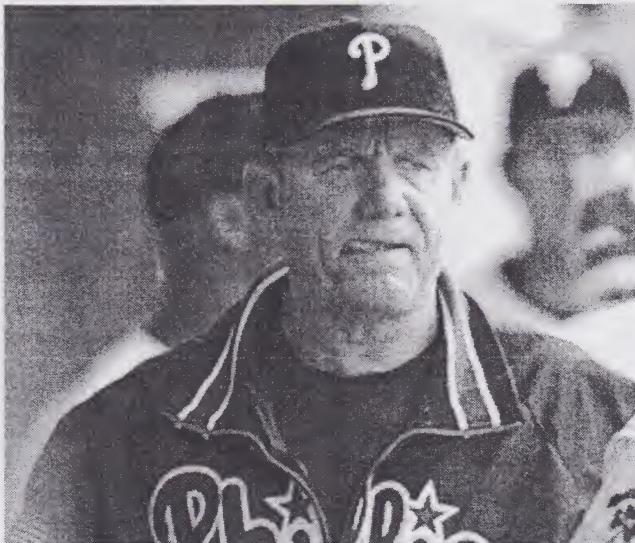
Everybody needs someone to beat up, and the East Coast defines itself as the East Coast by caricaturizing the West Coast, which I didn't fully understand until I moved back to the West after growing up in California and then living in the East for fifteen years. It's simple but true: power is a fulcrum. East/west; north/south; white/black; male/female: Group X always needs Group Y to buff its own sense of superiority. We are mind-haunted civilization; you are the physical beauty we'll contemplate.

In the *New York Review of Books*, Thomas Powers writes, "Larry McMurtry, a widely read and cosmopolitan man despite his reputation as a Western writer...."

Jonathan Raban, a British writer who lives in Seattle, says, "Living in the West, I find myself a victim of 'Westism'—that mixture of condescension, sentimentality, and naïve romanticism, which is strangely like old-fashioned sexism. The assumptions of the East about the West—its politics, society, open-air sports like fishing and skiing—are mighty annoying, if you happen to live in a region conceived by New York to be a sort of rugged national park, stretching from the Mississippi to the Pacific, inhabited by unlettered rustics. In actuality, there are many more nerds than Marlboro Men in the West I live in, from **Bill Gates** to **Jeffrey Katzenberg**."

A box at the bottom of the front page of the *New York Times* guides readers to stories inside: "G.I. Killed in Afghanistan," "Fujimori Seeks a Comeback," "US Airways Plans Cuts," "Office Shopping Spree," and "Bear Concerns at Yosemite." The West is forever the 22-second nature non-story at the end of the network news.

Philadelphia Phillies manager **Larry Bowa**, born and



raised in Philadelphia, says, "There's more of a sense of urgency to excel on the East Coast. They don't have a lot of other things to do, whereas fans have a lot of stuff to do out there on the West Coast. Going to the ballpark's more laid-back. It's a little more casual. It's really a form of entertainment for them. On the East Coast, it's, 'Hey, we want you to win at all costs. It's our summer; don't screw it up.' If you're not a mentally tough person and you're traded to an East Coast team, it might have an effect on you—fans calling you a bum. If that bothers you, you

might want to get into another line of work. Or try to get traded back out West."

The West is invariably referred to as "out West," as a way to underscore that the Northeast is the center of American civilization. China/Japan; Japan/Korea; Athens/Rome; Christianity/the Roman Empire; London/New York; East Coast/West Coast—every society has forever condescended to every society that followed afterward.

Mo Vaughn was raised near Boston and had several good years with the Red Sox before being traded to Anaheim, for whom he was an extremely expensive disappointment. "Being on the West Coast, I learned how much I love the East Coast," he said. "The intensity of the will to succeed just wasn't there. Every place has got its issues. But for me, as a ballplayer, I need to be in the fire. I can't be out there on Mars." Out there. "I've got to be in the mix, man."



Upon being traded to the New York Mets, Vaughn said, "You're in the limelight here and you're going to be seen. If you're not intimidated by it, it can help you as a player. For me, to have that on an everyday basis can only bring your game up, because you can't hide. There's nowhere to go." This relentless scrutiny was the very thing that drove Vaughn out of Boston—he said he felt suffocated playing in the same place where he had grown up—and in New York he was an even bigger bust than he was in Anaheim.

"I was brought up in a pressure-packed situation in Boston," he said. "Overall, the East Coast is a get-it-done-yesterday type situation, and I seem to thrive on that." In 2002, his first season with New York, he batted .259—his worst average in ten years—while

Anaheim won the World Series.

Geographic snobbery is the last refuge of the fallen. One of the least motivated players ever to play in the NBA, **Benoit Benjamin**, shortly after being traded from Seattle to New Jersey, said, “As far as I’m concerned, the real basketball games are on the East Coast.”

In a letter to the editor in the December 2002 issue of *Harper’s*, **Joe Ferullo**, of Studio City, CA, said, “**Mark Slouka** rightly argues that September 11 generated an apocalyptic response because Americans considered themselves immune to, and protected by God from, such acts. Let me take his argument further. The attacks of 9/11 generated such a response because they took place in New York City. Many of the people Slouka quotes, and nearly all the media reports he mentions, are from New York. The attacks hit them where they live, and the commentators, although they purport to speak for the nation, have for quite some time spoken for a small world confined by the Hudson, East, and Harlem rivers. I strongly suspect that if those horrible events had occurred instead in Los Angeles, the national (that is to say, New York-based) media reaction would have been different. After an appropriate period of respectful silence, the talking heads and newsweeklies would have trotted out timeworn homilies about how Los Angeles had brought this on itself, thinking it could be isolated from the real world in a bubble of sand, sunshine, and mass-produced make-believe. If Seattle had been the target, I imagine national commentators would have ruminated on how this was one more, though extraordinarily painful, step in that city’s decline since the irrationally exuberant dot-com days. An attack on, say, Miami would not have been expanded into evidence that evil had returned to the planet, that the entire world had been irrevocably altered, that nothing would ever be the same anywhere.”

New York native **Gordon Edelstein**, for many years the artistic director of the Seattle Repertory Theater, said, upon becoming artistic director of the Long Wharf Theater in New Haven, “In Seattle, when the curtain rises on a play, the audience is open, but their tacit agreement is that life is pretty good, it’s important to be comfortable, and human beings actually can be healthy. The curtain rises on a New York audience, and everybody agrees we’re basically sick and we want redemption and we want a good time, but we’re not made uncomfortable by deeply disturbing news about our psyche. In fact, that feels like the truth to us.” Of course this feels like the truth to you:

you get to control what’s agreed upon as truth. The issue isn’t that this E/W dichotomy isn’t indicative of real regional differences; it’s that the dichotomy gets completely cartoonized and the “greater than” arrow always points to one side of the equation.

Larry King once said, “Bums in New York could run a grocery chain in Des Moines.” In my experience, people in the West (or, for that matter, the Midwest) are at least as intelligent and driven as people in the East; they just cloak these qualities in a more understated cultural style.

In **Thomas Pynchon’s** *Mason & Dixon*, **Reverend Cherrycoke** says, “As to journey west, in the same sense of the Sun, is to live, raise children, grow older, and die, carried along by the stream of the day, whilst to turn Eastward is somehow to resist time and age, to work against the Wind, seek ever the dawn, even, as who can say, defy death.” “Eastward” here is capitalized; “west” is lower-case.

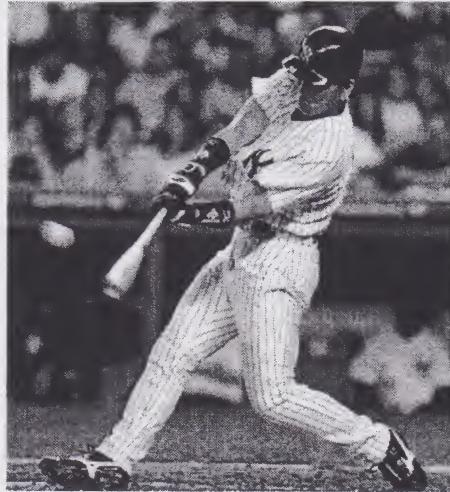
The East is part of the history of art; the West is the mere muck of life.

The New Yorker sponsored a cruise ship going around the world from Los Angeles to Greece; different *New Yorker* contributors entertained passengers on different legs of the journey. On the L.A. to Australia run, all of the *New Yorker* artists on board ship were cartoonists.

S. Bass, of San Francisco, in a recent letter to the *New Yorker*, wrote: “In lauding Manhattan’s street grid plan in his review of *Gotham: A History of New York City to 1898*, Paul Goldberger fails to comment on one invidious urban effect that was unforeseeable when the plan was adopted in 1811: the grid plan’s ‘equalization’ permits motor vehicle traffic to universally intrude on and interfere with pedestrianism, making New York unlike other great cities in the world, where it’s relatively easy when walking to find a quiet side street. In deeming the plan brilliant urban planning, Goldberger seems to be confusing New York’s ‘determined rambunctiousness’ with the stress caused by the grid’s constant, omnipresent crush of traffic.” New York’s much vaunted “energy,” in other words, is just gridlock. New Jersey Nets’ (famously fragile) forward **Donny Marshall** said several years ago, “I feel more comfortable with the East Coast style of basketball. You go to southern California and you see palm trees and beautiful people.” Marshall himself is model-handsome. “I remember our trip to New York to

play St. John's when I was at UConn. The people weren't beautiful; they were jittery. Everything was so fast. I loved it."

Mark Twain wrote about New York, "There is something about this ceaseless buzz and hurry and bustle that keeps a stranger in a state of unwholesome excitement all the time, and makes him restless and uneasy."



Even Japanese baseball star **Hideki Matsui**, when he was being courted by several American baseball teams, told Japanese reporters, "I want to go to an East Coast team where there's some pressure to perform." Or, alternatively

and interestingly, a "West Coast team if that team can help me develop further as a player." Skills vs. scrum.

Coming from Philadelphia to Phoenix for his first season, **Charles Barkley** said, "Guys thought I was too mean in [training] camp, but they don't get it. You can't just show up on opening night and say, 'O.K., now we're going to be mean.' I think living in the sun makes these guys soft. **John Havlicek** [of the Boston Celtics] told me that. In the East, you wake up, you look out, and there's snow on the ground. You start the day pissed off. Out here"-out here—"you wake up, it's beautiful out. You put on the Bermudas and have breakfast on the porch."

During the 2002 season, Washington State University quarterback **Jason Gesser** played on a severe ankle strain to lead his team to a victory over UCLA and into the Rose Bowl. It was about as courageous an athletic performance as one could hope to see; if he'd been from Pittsburgh, there would have been much discussion of how both his grandfather and father had worked in the coal mines, but Gesser is from Hawaii, so no one knew what to say to mythologize the moment.

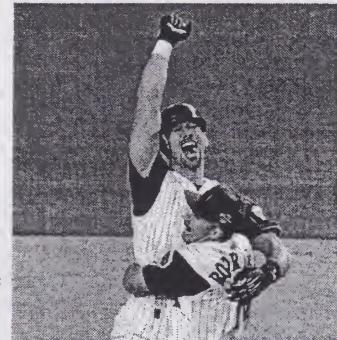
A New York Times interviewer didn't understand why **Albert Brooks** didn't find it a compliment to be called the "West Coast Woody Allen." When she asked him what he'd rather be called, he said, "Why do I have to be called something?" She still didn't get it, so he said, "How about 'the living Stanley Kubrick'?"

In the 2001 NBA Finals, the Los Angeles Lakers were expected to defeat the Philadelphia 76ers easily, but Philadelphia won the first game. Afterward, sportscaster **Marv Albert** said, "Philly was down, 18-5. If this were a series in the West, you'd feel like Philly didn't believe in themselves. But Philly came back." Only people in the East believe in themselves. Only people in the East have heart. Everyone else is a scarecrow or, perhaps, the Cowardly Lion. Los Angeles won the next four games, but it had nothing to do with heart or character. They were just, boringly, the better team.

When Arizona beat the Yankees in the 2001 World Series, it wasn't perceived to be a fable; the Diamondbacks got lucky in Game 7.

When Anaheim beat the Yankees in the 2002 American League Division Series, New

York only happened to be in a batting slump at the wrong time. When Seattle came back from a 2-0 deficit to beat New York in the American League Championship Series in 1995, the Mariners weren't displaying superior fortitude; the Yankees ran out of steam. When an East Coast team, or especially a New York team wins, it's a morality tale about the little engine that could or, contrariwise, the unstoppable forces of capitalism. When a team from somewhere else wins, it's just, shrug, a game. It's not shrouded in mythology. Whoever owns the story tells its meaning.



David Shields is the author of eight books of fiction and nonfiction, including *Black Planet: Facing Race During an NBA Season* (a finalist for the National Book Critics Circle Award) and *Remote: Reflections on Life in the Shadow of Celebrity* (winner of the PEN/Revson Award). His most recent book is *Body Politic: The Great American Sports Machine*.

Winning is Nothing, Vengeance is Everything

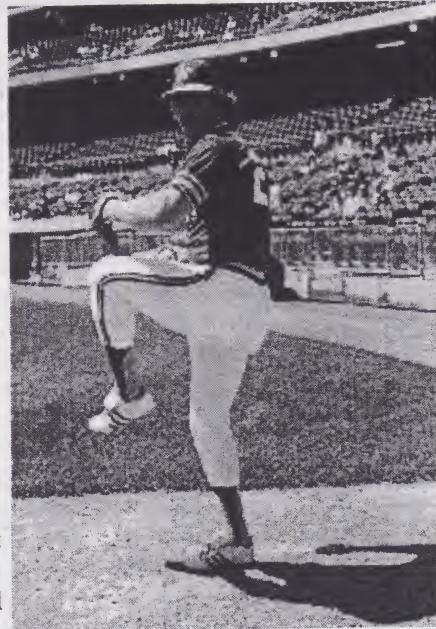
by Ken Derr



In 1967, Charlie Finley moved his lowly Kansas City Athletics to Oakland. In the next 13 years, he would wedge a path of self-obsessed destruction and dark triumph through this fair city unlike anything seen even from the likes of **Rick Barry** or **John Matusak**. Charlie was a man so in love

with himself and so needy for attention and power that he drove a stake through the heart of his best players and teams if either dared to get more attention than he did. Along the way, he even tried to revolutionize the game in Veeckian fashion. Who can forget orange baseballs, designated runners, Charlie O the mule (a more fitting mascot there never was), the mechanized rabbit that would pop up and give the home plate ump fresh balls, nearly neon uniform colors, a 12 year old M.C. Hammer officially listed as Vice President of the organization, and many more. Almost everyone that came into contact with him attests to his charms when he needed something from them, but if there was a pettier or crueler professional sports owner in the last 30 years, he's going to have to duke it out with Charlie in the grave.

Whenever a player got too big for his britches in Charlie's mind, Charlie would have to bring that player down a peg. For instance, in 1970, the A's ace, **Jim "Catfish" Hunter**, took out a \$150,000 loan from Finley for a 500-acre ranch he wanted to buy near his home in North Carolina. Hunter was to pay back Charlie \$20,000 a year at 6%. That year, Finley proceeded to call Catfish every day he was scheduled to pitch to ask about the loan. He was relentless. Hunter became so upset about the



harassment that he went into a horrid slump and failed to win a single game in August, and this was from a consistent 20-game winner and all-around terrific guy. Catfish finally sold off 400 acres and paid back the loan in full, because he was afraid his career would be ruined if he didn't get out from underneath Charlie's constant badgering.

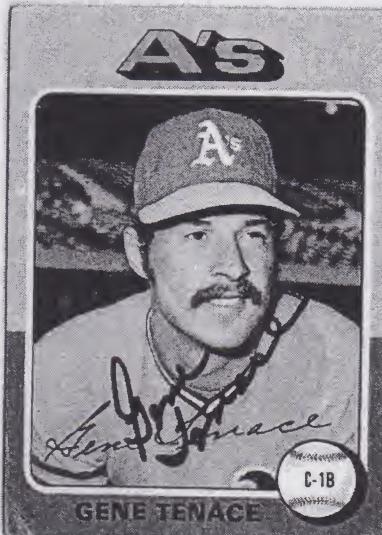
Reggie Jackson, as most folks know, has a gargantuan ego. Even Reggie's desperate narcissism, however, was dwarfed by Charlie's. After Reggie's 1969 season in which he hit 49 homers and received a tremendous amount of media coverage, Jackson's agent demanded a considerable salary increase. Charlie refused and instead offered five grand more, stating that only seasoned veterans deserved large bumps in salary after they had produced consistent seasons, and Charlie wouldn't budge. Reggie was incensed, and held out for part of spring training, but he eventually became eager to play. Finley finally agreed to a \$10,000 increase, still some \$30,000 less than Jackson wanted and the market called for, but Finley vowed to teach that ungrateful bastard a lesson. He had Reggie benched against left-handers for most of the season (until **Dick Williams** would arrive the next year, Finley made puppets of his managers), pinch hit for him at critical times and even threatened to send him down. Jackson hit .237 with 23 homers in 1970, and once again, Charlie had used his power to win a personal grudge at the expense of the team and its fans. And that made him happy. At least for a while.

In 1971 Finley hired irascible Dick Williams to manage the team, who early in spring training called a meeting. Williams had heard that in previous years, players had gone behind the manager's back to Finley if they had problems, and Williams was going to address the issue. "Here is the phone. If you want to call Charlie, go ahead. But that's the last time you're going to call him. I'm the manager, and if you have any problems, you come to me." Williams earned the respect of his players, and the A's won their division, only to lose to the more experienced Orioles in the playoffs. In 1972, however, the unthinkable championship run began. The A's again swept to the division title, and in the ALCS, they took on the Tigers, led by the fiery **Billy Martin** (who would later become the A's manager, establish his own brand and style called **Billyball**, and set records for whiskey shots in the Oakland Hilton, but that's another story). Martin and Finley had

bad blood between them over an alleged contract offer that Finley made to Martin to manage the A's in 1970, which Martin claimed Finley reneged on. Finley, of course, said Martin backed out. Earlier in the season, the two teams had brawled when Tiger pitcher **Bill Shayback** plugged **Campy Campaneris** and **Angel Manguel** in consecutive at bats, apparently to let Charlie know that nobody messes with Billy, and he was playing hardball. So the stage was set for fireworks, and it didn't take long in Game 1 when Martin ordered Tiger pitcher **Lerring LaGrow** to hit Campy (they just don't name 'em like they used to) in the ankle, in an attempt to take out his legs, which were an integral part of the A's offense. Campy took a different kind of offense and proceeded to fling his bat at LaGrow's head, just missing the stunned hurler. Less psychotic heads eventually prevailed, but after the game, AL President **Joe Cronin** suspended Campy for the series. LaGrow and Martin got out of jail free, which incensed Finley, who claimed the league had a vendetta against him, which it probably did, but it probably had one against Martin too, proving intent is harder to prove than a bat that is flying through the air, and there it was. Campy's suspension put a crimp in another of Finley's moonbeam strategies. All of the A's second basemen were weak hitters, so each time one would come to bat,

Williams would put in a pinch hitter and then replace him at second, only to pinch hit again when the replacement's turn to bat came. With Campy out of the series, however, **Dal Maxville** had to move to short, which forced Williams to use catcher **Gene Tenace** late in Game 3, who then proceeded to drop a sure double play

throw that would have given the A's the sweep. They went on to win the series in five games, but Williams vowed to abandon Finley's directives forever. Reggie also pulled a hamstring in Game 5, which would keep him out of the upcoming World Series, but the A's weren't done



sticking pins in themselves yet. Starting pitcher **Vida Blue** came in late in Game 5 to save the game for **John "Blue Moon" Odom**, and after the game, he asked Blue Moon why he couldn't finish what he started and put his hands around his neck in the universal choke sign. Odom attacked Vida and they went at it briefly before teammate separated them. They were now officially ready for the Big Red Machine.

Going into the '72 Series, no one gave the A's a chance against the team that everybody considered the class of the league. The Reds had superstars in **Johnny Bench**, **Tony Perez** and **Pete Rose**, and they were scoring runs in bushels. But unlikely star Gene Tenace hit two homers in the opener off **Gary Nolan** to help the Oaktown boys shock everyone and take Game 1, which prompted the always gracious Rose to state, "I'm not impressed by the A's. They have nothing." The mustachioed one, **Rollie Fingers**, saved Catfish's gem in Game 2 after **Joe Rudi** made one of the most miraculous homer-saving catches of any World Series off the bat of **Denis Menke**, and suddenly, the A's had a flabbergasting 2-0 lead in the Series. The Reds managed to win Game 3 by a 1-0 score, but all anyone remembers is what transpired in the 8th. With the Reds threatening and Fingers at a 3-2 count to Bench, Dick Williams visited the mound. As he began his return to the dugout, he pointed at first base and put up four fingers, signifying that he wanted Fingers to put Bench on. The A's catcher put out his right hand to indicate the free pass, and Rollie through a strike right down the middle, ending the inning. The A's lost the game, but won the battle for Game 3 memories.

Tenace hit another homer in Game 4 to help the A's win 3-2 and put the A's in an unthinkable position—taking out the Machine in just five games. The Reds rallied, however, sliming out a 5-4 victory. Before Game 6 in Cincinnati, a woman in line to get in the Stadium overheard a man say, "If Tenace hits a homer, he won't walk out of the park." She alerted officials, and the police found a loaded gun on the nutbag, prompting Reggie to tell Tenace after the game, "Hey, if ya got to go, Gene, at least it will be on national television." Obviously shaken by the insanity running through the city that **Jerry Springer** would soon run, the A's fell quietly, 8-1, setting up the ultimate finish. In Game 7, the A's used all their best starting pitchers to subdue the Shrinking Red Machine and eked out a 3-2 victory. Oakland finally had its championship, and pitcher **Kenny Holtzman** explained why: "Finley kept us all hungry and at each

other's throats and at his too. That gave us the edge we needed to win." Finley would dance on the dugout with his wife that night, but the fun was just beginning.

1973 began typically, as the A's traded for perennial grouch **Billy North**, who had nearly come to blows with **Leo Durocher** in Chicago. North and Reggie were at each other from the beginning, and it probably didn't help that they were dating the same woman. One night it exploded in a clubhouse donnybrook, but details were kept relatively secret. When asked later who had won the fight, North smirked, "I played that night, and Reggie didn't." But clubhouse brawls only fueled the fires of resentment, and the A's again won their division, led by their three 20-game winners: Vida Blue, Catfish Hunter and Kenny Holtzman. Again they were to take on the Orioles, but this time they were the defending world champions, and they were stupid with confidence. That didn't stop more fisticuffs, though, as Rollie Fingers and John "Blue Moon" Odom went at it after the A's blew Game 4. Catfish calmly stepped in to shut them out in Game 5, however, to send the A's back to the Series, where they would meet the New York Mets.

The A's took Game 1, but all hell broke loose in Game 2 in what would become one of Finley's lowest moments. In the 8th inning, reserve infielder **Mike Andrews**, who had played sparingly but was inserted into the game late, made errors on two consecutive plays to cost the A's the game. In the clubhouse afterwards, Finley met Andrews with a contract stating that Andrews was physically unable to play, which had already been signed by the team doctor. Andrews was fine physically, but Finley wanted him off the team at once, and he also wanted to get another player on the roster, which he wouldn't be able to do if he just kicked Andrews right out of the clubhouse for incompetence. The next day at practice, the A's players arrived wearing black patches with Andrews' number 17 on them, and threatened to boycott the Series if he was not returned to the lineup. Commissioner **Bowie Kuhn** may have ironically saved Finley the further embarrassment by reinstating Andrews himself and reprimanding Finley for embarrassing his own player. The A's won Game 3 and the Mets got Game 4, which was probably most notable for Met fans giving Andrews a standing ovation when he came in to pinch hit. The Mets took Game 5, but the A's came back to win the last two to secure their second consecutive championship. Once again, however, nothing went smoothly in the East Bay, as manager Dick Williams announced on national TV

after the game that he was resigning effective immediately, which may be the greatest indicator of how miserable it was to work for Charlie Finley.



Finley replaced Williams with **Alvin Dark**, who had almost been run out of baseball in 1964 after he suggested in an interview that blacks and Latinos weren't as smart as white ballplayers. Dark had found God since then though, and this now devout Christian, who had run off with

a stewardess while married with kids, now had the unenviable task of replacing the man who had commanded the respect of the Mustachioed rowdies and were riding more than a little high on themselves after two titles. Dark was just happy to be back in baseball, and he was essentially Charlie's lackey. When Finley suggested they find themselves a speedster as a designated runner, Dark suggested **Herb Washington**, whom he had seen win the 60-yard dash in an indoor track event. That year, the A's were not as dominant during the regular season, but they still managed to win the division with 90 wins. Again they took out the Orioles in the ALCS, and then it was time for more the A's singular brand of twisted fun. The A's were to take on the LA Dodgers, but there was trouble in Oaktown. Rollie Fingers was going through a nasty divorce, and he was near the emotional boiling point after weeks of his teammates' ribbing. When, you guessed it, John "Blue Moon" Odom made a classy comment about Fingers' inability to keep a woman before Game 1 at a workout in Dodger Stadium, Fingers erupted and punched Odom in the face. Odom retaliated by head butting Fingers' chest. Obviously, the A's were ready, and they took Game 1. The Dodgers had a 3-0 lead in the 9th of Game 2, but the A's rallied, scoring two on a Joe Rudi single. Alvin Dark then replaced Rudi with Herb Washington, hoping the designated speedster could steal second. Dodger iron man reliever **Mike Marshall**,

however, had other ideas. He stepped off the mound three times. He threw quickly to first almost nailing Washington, and then, just as Charlie's prized invention started to take his lead, Marshall winged a quick throw over and picked him off, effectively ending the experiment that had never really worked in the first place. The Dodgers won, 3-2, but it was their last hurrah. The A's won the last three games of the series, sweetened in Game 5 when **Bill Buckner**, who had been talking trash about the A's the whole series, idiotically tried to turn a double into a triple in the 8th inning of a one-run game. The A's had won three consecutive World Series, the most unlikely of dynasties, but it was all about to come to an inglorious end.

Despite one of the greatest and most improbable runs in baseball history, few of the A's players were happy, and almost all of the reasons pointed in one direction: Charlie Finley. Catfish Hunter had never forgiven Finley for the loan incident, and when Charlie failed to make a payment on a life insurance policy for Hunter that was part of Catfish's contract, Hunter contacted his agent, which was in September of their '74 drive for the title. Catfish did not want to do anything until after the Series, but then, after much legal wrangling, **Marvin Miller**, Executive Director of the Players Association, claimed that Finley had breached Hunter's contact and that he could become a free agent. More negotiations, threats and insults ensued, but ultimately, **Peter Seitz**, the only independent member of the arbitration committee, ruled Jim "Catfish" Hunter an unrestricted free agent. Baseball would never really be the same again. Once Hunter was free to negotiate, he learned how valuable he was on the free market. He eventually signed a \$3.75 million deal with the Yankees (not much has changed in 30 years) over five years, which may now sound like much, but his previous year's contract was \$100,000. Amazingly, the A's still went on to win 98 games and their division the next year, but this time, they did not have enough in the playoffs, and the Red Sox swept them in three games.

Between the 1975 and 1976 seasons, Seitz made another ruling that was arguably even more critical to the future of the game than the Hunter decision. Seitz ruled that the reserve clause in players' contracts bound them to their teams for only one year beyond the contract. They could become free agents after that. The writing was on the bloodied clubhouse wall, and Charlie Finley's bare bones operation had to come crumbling down. Finley's first move was to trade Reggie Jackson and Ken Holtzman to

Baltimore. Then on June 15, the day of the trading deadline, he sold Joe Rudi and Rollie Fingers to the Red Sox for \$1 million each. Then he sold Vida Blue to the Yankees for \$1.5 million. The players were in a state of shock, especially since the A's were scheduled to play the Red Sox, but Rudi and Fingers switched uniforms and clubhouses and then sat on the opposite bench. Three days later, Bowie Kuhn declared the sales null and void, and Finley countered with a \$10 million lawsuit against Kuhn. His claim, however, was denied in U.S. District Court. Meanwhile, Finley wouldn't play the players he had sold. "You don't belong to me," he said. When the players threatened another boycott, Finley backed off. Through all the chaos, the A's still put together a respectable season, falling just 2 1/2 games shy of another West Division title. The damage, however, had been done. Fingers, Rudi and **Sal Bando** were gone as free agents after the season. Vida Blue was traded to the Giants after one more season. Billy North was traded to the Dodgers. The next year, the A's lost 108 games. In 1980, Finley would sell the team to Levi's owner **Walter Haas**, ironically one of the most decent men imaginable, and the end of the era was over.

Charlie Finley "presided" over one of the greatest dynasties in baseball history, but you could argue that he helped create the conditions that led to the explosion of free agency, George Steinbrenner and the Yankees' resurgence. Finley ruled in a time when owners were still feudal lords who were not shy about reminding their serf who was boss, but when the times began to change, he refused to. He was creative and charming and one miserable son of a bitch if you crossed him, and he minded the ship for one hell of a ride. It's hard to imagine a ragtag bunch of underpaid, under shaved and under disciplined players winning three straight these days, as the money in the game is so great and the stakes for success so high that perhaps the days of wacky but extraordinary characters are gone forever. So while it's nearly impossible to find anyone today who has much good to say about Charlie Finley's integrity or business techniques, maybe we can remember him as the creator of such absurd conditions that only absolute failure or success could thrive under them. The Swinging A's created their success, but when Catfish Hunter took off for New York, perhaps something real left with him. Forever.

Ken Derr lives in Oakland but roots for the Giants, a childhood choice that has cost him thousands in therapy.

The Great Debuts of 2004

by John Shiffert

All right class, please pay attention. It's time for a pop baseball quiz. No, **Dickie Stuart**, you don't have to actually catch the pop, just take the following quiz...



What do **Hank Aaron**, **Danny Murphy** and **Bruno Haas** have in common?

Well, let's see...they're all members of the species *Homo Sapiens*. They were all major league baseball players (though if you blinked back in 1915, you missed Haas). And they were all better fielders than little **Dickie Stuart**, although, for that matter, my five-year-old **Jared** is

already a better fielder than Dr. **Strangeglove**. All correct answers...but not what we're looking for today. Let's try another question, very closely related to the first, and see if that helps...

What do **David Aardsma**, **Kaz Matsui** and **Casey Daigle** have in common? That's right, they're all currently professional baseball players in the good old U.S. of A. But, what in the name of **Bombo Rivera** do they have to do with Aaron, Murphy and Haas?

It just so happens that Aardsma, Matsui and Daigle all made their major league debuts in 2004. And quite notable debuts they were, though for different reasons. And, it just so happens that Aardsma's, Matsui's and Daigle's debuts harked back to those of Aaron, Murphy and Haas (in that order). Still confused? Read on...

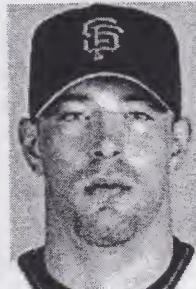
It was 50 years ago that the future home run king, who started his professional career as a teenaged infielder in the Negro Leagues with the Indianapolis Clowns, made his major league debut in a game at Crosley Field against the Redlegs (you didn't dare call them "Reds" in the **McCarthy Era**), thanks in part to a spring training broken



leg on the part of **Bobby Thomson** (who also had a little fame for hitting home runs). The Braves, then still in Boston, had paid the Clowns the typical pittance—\$7500—for Aaron in May 1952. At least that was \$7500 more than **Branch Rickey** and the Dodgers paid the Kansas City Monarchs for **Jackie Robinson** in 1945. After a year-and-a-half in the minors, Aaron desegregated the Braves (bet he was glad they didn't move to Atlanta until 1966, because this was just five years after the Klan threatened to shoot Robinson and/or **Roy Campanella** if they played in an exhibition game at Ponce de Leon Park) in their 1954 opener. For the record, Cincy won the game, 9-8, with **Bob Buhl** getting the loss and **Joe Nuxhall** picking up the win in relief of...**Bud Podbielan**? That's right, the old Dodgers pitcher was a starter for Cincinnati in 1953 and 1954...although why he was starting the 1954 opener is a little hard to explain, since he'd gone 6-16 with a 4.73 ERA in 1953. Maybe because the rest of the Redlegs starters were **Art Fowler**, **Corky Valentine** and **Fred Baczewski**.

While the 20-year old Hammer didn't hit any of his 755 home runs in his debut—he only hit 13 all year in 468 at bats—he did set one notable standard that lasted for almost 50 years. In fact, a mark that will, in all likelihood, prove to be longer lasting than his career home run mark, which figures to expire in its mid-30s in a few years. When Hank Aaron took the field in Cincinnati on April 13, 1954, he became the all-time major league leader in the alphabetical roster, supplanting **Ed Abbaticchio**, a Phillies, Braves and Pirates infielder from 1897 to 1910. (Before Abbaticchio, it was **Bert Abbey**, an 1890s National League pitcher.) "Batty," as he was known, was a mostly forgettable second baseman/shortstop, creating slightly more than the league average in runs created per 27 outs (4.12 to 3.95) and posting range factors slightly above (shortstop - 5.58 to 5.54) and below (second - 5.08 to 5.27) the league figures.

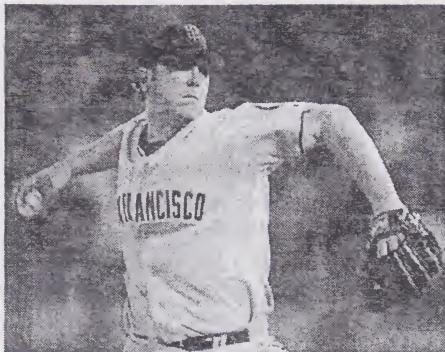
And while Aaron's home run mark is still intact at this writing, his alphabetical record fell on April 6, 2004, when pitcher **David Aardsma**, the Giants' 2003 first-round draft choice (22nd overall), picked up a win in his first major league game. Debuting with two scoreless, though shaky, innings against the Astros in the



Juiced Park, Aardsma got the win when the Giants welcomed **Andy Pettite** to the National League and real baseball, shelling he of the career 9.54 hits per nine innings and \$11.5 million salary for 11 hits and six runs in 5

1/3 innings. Aardsma, who got the game ball and the lineup card, was pitching for his hometown Rice University less than a year before his major league debut. Not surprisingly, he left dozens of passes at the "Will Call" window, including some for his former teammates, who were conveniently rained out of a game against the University of Houston.

Aardsma, in relief of a badly-battered **Brett Tomko**



(seven hits and three runs in four innings... he didn't last long enough to get the win), managed to escape from his two innings (the sixth and the seventh) without being

scored upon, despite giving up three hits and a walk without striking out anyone and throwing just 32 of 52 pitches for strikes. However, no matter what Aardsma does or doesn't do from here on in, he's now number one in all the encyclopedias. And, he can always say he took a record away from Hank Aaron.

Then there was Danny Murphy, who made his American League debut on July 8, 1902 with the Philadelphia Athletics against Boston Somersets. If you thought Kaz Matsui broke in with a bang... Certainly, Matsui's first American major league game at Turner Field was worth noting. A home run on the first pitch he saw, plus two doubles and two walks. Five times up against the Braves, and five times on base. That's 3-1-3-3 if you're scoring at home.

Unprecedented? Not quite. There's a fairly close historical precedent to Matsui's big opening night...in fact, an even bigger first game, albeit in the American League and not



the American major leagues. Back in April 1902, the Philadelphia Athletics lost superstar **Napoleon Lajoie** (his 1901 Triple Crown season was .426-14-125) to a Pennsylvania Supreme Court ruling, once again proving the difficulties involved in dealing with Philadelphia lawyers.

Seems as if the Court felt that King Larry was a

unique commodity, and was thence still the property of the Philadelphia Phillies, despite his one-sided contract that, in effect, tied him to the Phillies in perpetuity (i.e., the Reserve Clause). **Connie Mack** then spent the next three months casting around for someone, anyone, to play second base. Primarily, this meant **Jud Castro**, one of the first Latin Americans (born in Medellin, Colombia) to play major league baseball. However, Jud was a dud...playing about like someone who had been sampling Medellin's most famous export. His range factor and fielding percentage were way below the league averages (Rng - 4.54 to 5.44; FPct - .918 to .948) and his OPS was right at the Ordonez Line (.601 to be exact) as he hit .245 with only four walks.



Finally, Mack remembered a good Philadelphian (he loved to use local players) who had played 27 games for the Giants in 1900 and 1901, going 24-for-94 with exactly one extra base hit. Undeterred, Mack called for Danny Murphy, who didn't arrive in Boston on the afternoon of July 8th until the game against the Somersets was already in the second inning. Without any kind of warmup or batting practice, Mack promptly stuck him out at second base in what ended up being one of the wildest games of the year. Murphy proceeded, in his American League debut, to go six-for-six with a grand slam (his only home



run all year) off **Cy Young** in a 22-9 A's rout. Actually, it took until the sixth inning for Murphy and his new teammates to really warm to the task at hand. By then they were facing **Doc Adkins**, and the Mackmen scored 12 runs on 12 hits with five players; Murphy, **Topsy Hartsel**, **Harry Davis** (Why aren't you in the Hall of Fame?), **Lave Cross** and **Socks Seybold** all getting two hits apiece. (This sound anything like the 18-10 game the day AFTER Matsui had his five-for-five?)

Davis would also hit a grand slam in this monumental blow-out (which tied the ML record for GS in a game), and even winning pitcher **Rube Waddell** (who only faced three batters in relief) singled in the big inning, which also helped set an AL record for hits—45 in all, 27 by Philadelphia. In the field, Murphy also proved an upgrade from Castro, handling 12 chances without an error. At this point, Mack didn't think he'd found a replacement for Lajoie, he probably thought he'd found another Lajoie. And, while that wasn't the case—Murphy would go on to hit .313 with a .767 OPS for the rest of the 1902 season and accumulate almost 1500 hits for Mack in the next 12 years—there's no doubt that the A's took off after Murphy joined the team. Of course, it didn't hurt that Waddell had joined the pitching staff (coming from the Los Angeles Loo-Loos...honest) a couple of weeks before Murphy arrived. Standing at 30-29 on the morning of July 8, the Athletics would proceed to go 30-12 over the next 42 games, ending up at 83-53, five games ahead of the St. Louis Browns for Mack's first pennant.

Of course, not every youngster Connie Mack picked up worked out as well as Danny Murphy. Even given that codicil, Bruno Haas' June 23, 1915 debut in the second game of a doubleheader against the New York Yankees was a dilly. Seems as if Mack's son **Roy** (of whom it was



later said, Connie Mack's sons became senile before he did) was attending Worcester Academy in Massachusetts while his dad was busy dumping salary before and during the 1915 season. With the A's pitching staff taking the biggest hit, the elder Mack was throwing every warm body he could find out on the mound. (Indeed, the starter in the first game of the June 23 doubleheader was another youngster making his pro baseball debut—**Minot "Cap" Crowell**, recently of Brown University. He gave up three singles, and lost 3-2 in 10 innings on a throwing error by one of **Home Run Baker**'s stand-ins at third.) So, when Mack junior told him about the ace of the Worcester Academy staff, a rather funny-looking, stocky, barrel-chested lefty with **Walter Johnson** arms, Mack senior signed Bruno Haas to a contract, and brought him to Shibe Park to oppose **Jack Warhop** and the rest of the visiting New Yorkers. He would have been better off staying in prep school (although he was 24 at the time... maybe he was a ringer at Worcester).

Since Mack didn't necessarily believe in relieving a pitcher's suffering, and since the Athletics were already 21-35 on the season, he left Haas out there for the duration of a 15-7 loss. And what a pitching line he rang up—a complete game 11-hitter with 16 walks and three wild pitches. Plus an error, just for good measure. Those 16 walks in one game to this day remain the American League record, much to the relief of **Boardwalk Brown**, who was sitting in the Yankee bullpen in Shibe Park that day...just 70 miles from his old high school in Atlantic City, N.J. (hence his nickname, Boardwalk). Two years earlier, while pitching for the Athletics, Brown had set the previous record for walks in a game with 15. Although he walked more than he struck out (291/251) in his 133 game, 731 inning career, Brown did go 17-11 in 1913 and was 38-40 in five major league seasons.

Which is better than Bruno Haas made out...at least in the majors. Despite what he saw on June 23, Mack was desperate enough for pitching—27 would-be hurlers saw mound time for the A's in 1915, including five who only appeared in one game, and four (one of whom was the one-and-only "**Squiz**" **Pillion**) who had just two appearances—that he actually threw Bruno back out there five more times, including another start on June 30 against the Red Sox (a 10-5 loss this time, although Bruno didn't get the decision.) And, since Haas did have an excellent arm (even if he wasn't sure where the ball was going), Mack also used him in the outfield for three games. His final major league totals? 0-1 in 14-and-third innings in

six games. Twenty three hits, 27 runs (only 19 earned—the A's fielding was also terrible that year), 28 walks and seven strikeouts. That's an 11.93 ERA. He was also 1-18 at the plate, with a walk. However, Bruno did do far better than you or I would have done in the major leagues, and he did go on to have a successful minor league career... playing until he was 55 years old. As **Tony Salin** notes in his *Baseball's Forgotten Heroes*, Haas' 12-game major league career was followed by 2246 games in the minors—mostly with St. Paul of the American Association as a .300-hitting outfielder with good doubles power and, in his younger years, 20 or so steals per season. He also went 8-8 as a minor league pitcher, getting his last win for Fargo-Moorhead in the Northern League in 1946...31 years after he first took the mound in Shibe Park.

Somehow, it seems unlikely that Casey Daigle will have a



similarly lengthy minor league career...if only because the career minor leaguer has basically become an extinct species. As to

how Daigle will do in the rest of his major league career, well, he's lucky he's not extinct after his major league debut on April 9 against the Cardinals. He's even luckier he doesn't have a severe case of whiplash after the Cards pounded five home runs off him through the still air of Bank One Ballpark (the roof was closed) in what may be the worst debut since Bruno Haas. Daigle's line in the 13-6 (almost as bad as 15-7) pounding...

| IP | H | R | ER | W | K | HR |
|-------|----|---|----|---|---|----|
| 2 2/3 | 10 | 8 | 8 | 0 | 0 | 5 |

Ouch! That's a Game Score of 6. At least he didn't walk anybody. Of course, maybe part of the problem may have been that 35 of his 49 pitches were strikes, strikes that tended to end up traveling long distances (he also gave up a couple of doubles to the 16 batters he faced). In case you missed it, here's what happened to the 23-year old right-hander...

First inning:
Albert Pujols hits a solo homer to put the Cards up 1-0. Well, that could happen to anyone. He hit 43 last year, and should have been the National League MVP.



Second inning: After the D'Backs stake Daigle to a 3-1 lead in the bottom of the first, **Reggie Sanders** comes off the DL (well, that's where he usually hangs out) and hits a two-run homer as part of a three-run inning that puts St. Louis back in the lead, 4-3. Third inning: **Ray Lankford**, who has hit exactly six major league home runs since the end of the 2001 season, hits a solo home run. Three batters later,

Scott Rolen hits a two-run home run. Two batters after that, Sanders comes up again and hits another solo homer, making the score 8-3 and, since **Bob Brenly** is more humane, though not a better manager, than Connie Mack, ending Daigle's first major league appearance...and maybe taking Bruno Haas off the hook.

John Shiffert is a member of the Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) and a sportswriter of some 35 years experience. His first book, *Baseball: 1862 to 2003* will be published by Publish America later this year. He writes a baseball e-zine, 19 to 21, that compares historical baseball events with the events of the current season. 19 to 21 is available by e-mail (johnshiffert@mail.clayton.edu), or through his website www.baseball19to21.com. He is also in the process of compiling stories from other authors for a baseball anthology entitled *Fathers and Sons and Baseball*. Submissions may be made by e-mail.

Zisk vs. ESPN

Anthony Kazmierczak: Mike Faloon, please.

Mike Faloon: I hate telemarketers! You're not a telemarketer are you?

AK: No, not really, my name's Anthony Kazmierczak, I'm an associate producer with *Baseball Tonight*, and I'm...

MF: ...calling to apologize for letting one of your ESPN.com goons steal our ideas? It's about time!

AK: I don't know what you're referring to.

MF: Come on. **Jim Baker**, ESPN Insider, January 13, 2004. The jerk wrote about MEPs, "Most Entertaining Players," we introduced that idea back in 2002—*Zisk*, issue #5.

AK: I don't know what you're referring to, and with all due respect, a little gratitude would be nice. We only make one of these calls to fans a year. I'm calling...

MF: If you'd have called me a few years ago, you could have avoided hiring **Rob Dibble**.

AK: Hey, he's good. He played for a World Series winner. He's got personality, he calls them as he...



MF: Stop, please, before you compare him to **Jim Rome**. Isn't Dibble the wizard who said, "I'll run through the streets naked if Ichiro hits over .280?"

AK: Just like a Mets fan, living in the past. That quote's from 2001. It's ancient history, **Swoboda**. Let's cut to the chase: our coverage here in

by Mike Faloon

2004. I've got a lunch with **Musial** at 1:00.

MF: Seriously? Stan the Man? That's awesome!

AK: I know, Stan's a great guy.

MF: Where do you start with a guy like that? The '46 World Series? Winning three MVPs? His 3,000th hit?

AK: Actually, you act like you already know those answers, and you ask him about his last round at Pebble Beach or how his granddaughter's doing at CalTech.

MF: Curb your enthusiasm, right. I never remember that.

AK: That's why you're still in 'zines.

MF: And you're calling me because?

AK: Because that doesn't mean you're always wrong. Our numbers are down this month, and we hear you don't like our Ichiro coverage, just wondering if there's a connection. A little bit of market research.

MF: Your numbers should be down, your **Ichiro** coverage—or lack thereof—sucks. When I checked the scores this morning, on ESPN2—you know when you guys list the scores on the bottom of the screen?

AK: We call that a crawl.

MF: You showed the Mariners/Rangers score from the previous night. The Mariners won 16-6 and Ichiro got four hits and yet he didn't even get mentioned in your "crawl." But you did list Randy friggin' Winn. That's wrong, that's getting second class treatment. And don't feed me the "small market" line either. Sure, Seattle's smaller than LA and New York, but it's not like you're waiting for the Pony Express to deliver news from that little remote outpost in Seattle. Just look at the guys Ichiro's going to pass in the coming weeks: **Ty Cobb**, **Rogers Hornsby**, **Lefty O'Doul**. Legends! Ichiro's putting up numbers nobody's approached in over 70 years, and the Devil Rays got more airtime for arriving late in New York for a meaningless series with the Yankees. The Devil Rays!

AK: Let's be honest. Ichiro...



MF: I'm not done yet. He's also got a shot at the record for most hits over a four-year span. Granted, that's more obscure, but it's no less impressive. And all I hear from ESPN is how Ichiro never walks, and how few RBIs he has, and his low slugging percentage. He's not there to slug the ball, he gets on base. And who's he going to drive in? The Mariners are awful. What more can you ask for than a guy, like Ichiro, who hits over .360 with runners in scoring position?

AK: Where'd you hear ESPN make those arguments?

MF: On ESPN radio.

AK: Okay, well, there's a reason those guys are radio. Where was all your righteous fervor the last time Ichiro took a shot at the single season hit record, back in 2001? Sounds like you're just another numbers geek, in awe of certain stats. You probably own a copy of *Cat Stevens' Numbers* album, right? His numerology record?

MF: Anthony, put the gloves back on—that's ugly, man. But just to be clear, that's the one with "Banapple Gas" on it, right?

AK: Just as I thought—just like I told the other producers—you've got nothing. Next, you're going to tell me to cut back on the amount of airtime *Baseball Tonight* gives to home runs.

MF: (Pause) Hear me out. All homers pretty much look the same. But, triples! It's all about triples! The throw

from right to the cutoff man to third base, the slide, the tag! I've also got an idea for an hour-long special on why the pitching mound should be lowered. Originally I envisioned it as a three-part series, but I'm a pragmatic guy.

AK: Well, now...

MF: You know what I mean, right? And web gems, those are cool, but you should make each clip longer, show more of the set up leading to the great play. And you should lead with the Ichiro countdown. Don't wait until he's five hits from the record before you start cutting away for every one of his at-bats. Who cares about **Bonds**? It's just a matter of time before he passes **Hank Aaron**, he just has to stay alive to get his record—which is a mere 30-years-old, I might add. Ichiro has severe limitations on his record, he's in a race against time!

AK: You know, you're making a lot of good points. We've got a couple guys leaving for Fox's Saturday game of the week—you're a teacher, maybe next summer, during your break, you'd like to come in and do some freelance work?

MF: Seriously?

AK: Fuck no. My god, triples? Thanks for your time. (click)



MF: Hello?

Single season hit leaders (as of 9/25/04)

| | |
|--|------------|
| 1. George Sisler, St. Louis Browns | 257 (1920) |
| 2. Bill Terry, New York Giants | 254 (1930) |
| 3. Lefty O'Doul, Philadelphia Phillies | 254 (1929) |
| 4. Al Simmons, Philadelphia A's | 253 (1925) |
| 5. Rogers Hornsby, St. Louis Cardinals | 250 (1922) |
| 5. Chuck Klein, Chicago Cubs | 250 (1930) |
| 6. Ichiro Suzuki, Seattle Mariners | 249 (2004) |
| 7. Ty Cobb, Detroit Tigers | 248 (1911) |
| 8. George Sisler, St. Louis Browns | 246 (1922) |
| 9. Ichiro Suzuki, Seattle Mariners | 242 (2001) |

Mike Faloon is the publisher of Zisk, and steadfastly denies he's in line for Tom Arnold's job on the Best Damn Sports Show Period.

Words Can't Begin to Describe How I'm Feeling by David Shields

I'll be honest with you: I'm here to tell you: The big key is: The bottom line is:

There's no question about it. There's no doubt about it. You got that right. I couldn't agree with you more. Obviously, the statistics speak for themselves. He's a highly touted freshman. Last week was his coming-out party. He has all the makings of a great one. He has unlimited potential. He's a can't-miss prospect. You'll be hearing a lot from him. He can play at the next level. He can play on Sundays. He's got his whole future ahead of him. He's a youngster who bears watching. He's being groomed for a future starting job. The team is really high on him. He's going to set the world on fire. He's a rookie phenom. He moves well for a big man. He's sneaky-fast. He has lightning-fast reflexes. He has great lateral mobility. He can pick 'em up and put 'em down. He has both speed and quickness. He's a cutter and a slasher. He has speed to burn. He's fleet-footed. He's a speed merchant. He can fly. He can flat-out fly. Speed kills. You can't teach speed. He's a unique physical specimen. He has a low center of gravity. He plays bigger than his size. He's built like a brick shithouse. He's a stud. He's a warrior. He's a bulldog. He has a linebacker mentality. He's fearless. He's a physical player. He's an impact player.

He's a tough, hard-nosed player. He's their spark plug. He's their role player. He understands his role on this team. He lets the game come to him. He's the consummate team player. He's an unselfish player. He's a real throwback. He plays with a lot of emotion. He has a passion for the game. He always gives 110%. He plays for the name on the front of the jersey, not the name on the back of it.

He's their playmaker. He's their field general. He's their floor general. He's a good table-setter. He's the glue that holds this team together. He makes the players around him better. He's a stand-up guy. The team looks to him for leadership. He's a leader on this team. He's a leader on and off the field. He's a true professional. He's a professional hitter. He just goes out there and gets the job done.

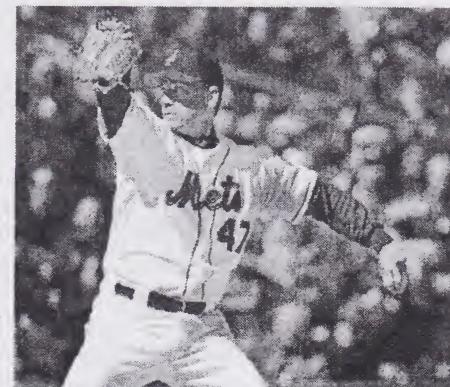
I was just doing my job. I was just hoping I could make a contribution in whatever way they needed me. He's some kind of player. He's the real deal. He's legit. He can

flat-out play. He's as good a player as there is in this league. He's one of the best in the business. He's in a league of his own. He's a franchise player. Players like that don't come along very often. He's a future Hall-of-Famer. He's a first-ballot lock. You can't say enough about him. He's got ice-water running through his veins. He thrives under pressure. He always comes through in the clutch. He really comes through at crunch time. He's their go-to guy when the game's on the line. He's money. He can carry the team on his shoulders. He can take them to the promised land. He's shooting well from downtown. He's making a living behind the 3-point arc. He's getting some good, open looks. He's shooting the lights out. He's in a zone. He's feeling it. He's in a groove. He's lighting it up. He's on fire. He's hot. He's locked in. He's unconscious. He blew 'em away.

They pay him to make those catches. That pass was very catchable. He's usually a sure-handed receiver. He usually makes that catch. He heard footsteps. He's become a little gun-shy. He's got all the skills; he just needs to put them together. He needs to bulk up in the off-season. He needs to elevate his game. He's playing out of position. He lacks the killer instinct.

He's only played sparingly this season. He's the subject of trade rumors. He's being shopped around. He's on the trading block. He has a new lease on life. He's bounced around a lot. He's a journeyman. He's the player to be named later. He's lost a step. He's their elder statesman. I just want to give something back to the community. He's a great role model. He's a winner in the bigger game of life. I just want to be able to take care of myself and my family.

He doesn't have that good fastball today. He's getting by with breaking stuff. He took something off that pitch. He's getting shelled. He's getting rocked. They're teeing off on him. Stick a



fork in him; he's done. They need to pull the plug. He hits the showers. Today I didn't have my plus-stuff. Regardless of what kind of stuff you have on a given day, you just try to go out there and pitch to the best of your ability and give your team an opportunity to win.

He got hung out to dry on that play. That was blown coverage. That was a missed assignment. They're playing in the shadow of their goalposts. He couldn't turn the corner. They're looking at third down and forever. They have to establish the running game. They have to air it out more. They have to take care of the football. That missed extra-point could come back to haunt them. You gotta hit the holes they make for you. You gotta follow your blockers out there. He's been quiet so far; they need to get him some more carries in the second half. This is their deepest penetration of the half. They've got to punch it in from here. They can't cough it up here. They need to just go out and make football plays.

He has all the time in the world. He has all day back there. He has all kinds of time. He has an eternity. He threw into double coverage. He threw up a prayer. He'd like to have that one back.

We just couldn't execute. We weren't able to sustain anything. They got us out of our game plan early. They took us completely out of our rhythm. We got beat like a gong. They beat us like a drum. They outplayed us. We ran into a buzzsaw. We didn't execute. Turnovers absolutely killed us. We didn't get any calls. Sometimes this game just comes down to the way the ball bounces. We didn't get any breaks. The better team won. They were the better team today.

Give them credit. We just didn't get the job done. We weren't mentally prepared. For some reason they've just got our number. We didn't come to play. They stepped up and made football plays. They wanted it more than we did. We have to put this loss behind us. This was a wake-up call. I tip my hat to them. We beat ourselves. We only have to look in the mirror. I don't want to point any fingers. We came up a little short. We had our chances. They wanted it more than we did. They outplayed us in every phase of the game. They just made the big plays and we didn't. We dug ourselves a deep hole. We have to put this game behind us. It's going to be a long plane ride home.

The coach is on the hot seat. His head is on the chopping

block. Unfortunately, there are days like this. We're in the business of winning. It's the nature of this business. It's time to move on. We have to look forward. We need a change of direction. We need a clean slate. We need someone who can take us to the next level.

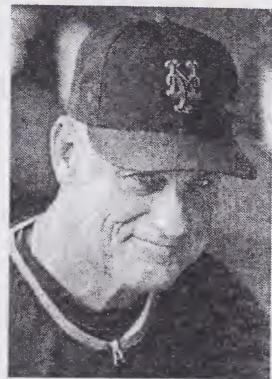
I feel the time has come for new leadership of this ballclub.

Everyone has to be held

accountable. It's all about winning and losing. I take the blame. I'm not going to stand up here and make excuses. Obviously, I'm disappointed things didn't work out. This is my responsibility and I feel badly I haven't been able to get us going where we should be going. I want to thank our great fans. I'm looking forward to the next chapter in my life. First I'm going to spend more time with my family.

I'm excited about this opportunity. I'm looking forward to the challenge. I have high expectations for this team. This franchise has a great winning tradition. We've got a good, solid foundation to build on. We're going to right the ship. We're going to get things turned around. This is a great sports town.

They stumbled coming out of the gate. They got off on the wrong foot. They're finally showing signs of life. They need a late surge. It's been an up-and-down-season. It's a marathon, not a sprint. This team is starting to make some noise. The players have bought into the system. He's got them headed in the right direction. He's a players' coach. He's more of a people person than an X's-and-O's guy. These guys have been busting their tails for him. He gets the most out of his players. They've turned the corner. They've raised the bar. They've gotten over the hump. They've finally gotten off the schneid. They're loaded this year. They have a strong supporting cast. There's no "I" in "team." They've added a new wrinkle to their offense. They're finally getting the respect they deserve. They're for real. They're here to stay. They're playing with new-found confidence. They've got great team chemistry. This team is like a family. Everything's clicking. We're starting to gel. Everybody's on the same page. We're hitting on all cylinders now. Everybody's contributing.



We've got the league's best offense against the league's best defense; something's gotta give. We've got an intriguing matchup. This is a pivotal game. This game is for the bragging rights. These teams flat don't like each other. There's no love lost between these two teams.

There's bad blood between these two teams. It's gonna be a war out there. When these two teams get together, you can throw out their records. You have to respect their athleticism. You have to respect their quickness. They have tremendous leaping ability. They can put up big numbers. They do a great job defensively. They play tough D. They're feeling each other out. Here's the payoff pitch. He chased a bad pitch. Tough to lay off that pitch. 3 up, 3 down. This is shaping up to be a real pitchers' duel. That ball should be playable. It's a can of corn. The ball took a bad hop. Strike-'im-out, throw-'im-out double-play. Inning over. He got a good jump. That brings the tying run to the plate.

He hits 'em where they ain't. He's a long-ball threat. He hit a solo-shot back in the fifth. He's seeing the ball real well. He wears them out. He made good contact. He hit that ball squarely. He hit that ball on the sweet spot. He knocked the cover off the ball. In any other ballpark, that's a home run. Chicks dig the long ball. He's sitting on dead red. He got all of it. He went yard. He hit it into the cheap seats. He flat jacked it. He went deep. He went downtown. Going, going, gone. It's outta here. See ya later. Goodbye, baseball. Kiss it goodbye. Aloha means goodbye.

It's been all theirs to this point. It's theirs to lose. They're not playing to win; they're playing not to lose. They're putting the ball in the deep freeze. They've gone to the Four Corners. Now's the time to run some clock.

Looks like we've got some extracurricular activity going on out there. Let's hope cooler heads prevail. They're mucking it up in the corner. He stood him up on the blue line. That's gotta hurt. He was mugged. He's gonna feel that one on Monday. Looks like we've got a player shaken up. Looks like he got his bell rung. That hit really cleaned his clock. He ran into a brick wall. He was literally run over by a freight train. He was blind-sided. He's slow getting up. He was really clotheslined. They can ill-afford to lose him. Their locker room must look like a MASH unit. X-rays are inconclusive. He left the field under his own power. We hate to speculate on the nature of the injury.

There's a flag on the play. It depends where they spot it. Terrible call, terrible call. We got hosed. We got jobbed. We got robbed. Highway robbery. They're the best refs money can buy. The refs should just let them play. Bad calls even out over the course of a season.

As Yogi said, it ain't over 'til it's over. It ain't over 'til the fat lady sings. They won't go quietly. We've still got plenty of football left. No need to panic; there's plenty of time left. You can feel the momentum shifting. Big Mo. They're going for the jugular. They can smell blood in the water. They're within striking distance. Now we've got a football game. It's a whole new ballgame. This team shows a lot of character. This team shows a lot of poise. This team shows a lot of resiliency. This team shows a lot of heart.

It all started with good field position. They've marched down the field. That was a goal-scorer's goal. He lit the lamp. He went high to the top shelf. He put the biscuit in the basket. He found the twine. He went upstairs. He nailed the buzzer-beater. She really stuck the landing. He hit paydirt. Nothing but net. This should be a chip shot for him. The kick splits the uprights.

What an incredible turnaround.

We found a way to win. A win is a win. It wasn't pretty, but we'll take it. I'm really proud of the way our guys hung in there. This is always a tough place to play. We're just glad to get out of here with a W. We're happy we could pull this one out at the end. They're tough competitors. They gave us all we could handle. They're a class act. Give them a lot of credit. I tip my hat to them. There are no easy games in this league. The game was a lot closer than the final score indicates. They weren't going to come in here and just lie down for us. We're going to use this as a building block. We'll use this win as a stepping stone to the next level.

What a difference a week makes.

We were really on our game. We took them out of their game. We really came to play. We brought our A-game. We knew what we had to do and went out and did it. We answered the call. This team has finally learned how to win. It was a total team effort. Obviously, this was a great win for us. It was a big win for us. We came to play. We stuck to the game plan. It was a total team effort. We wanted to make a statement. We sent a

message. We came through when it counted. We're going to savor the victory tonight, then tomorrow morning we'll start looking at film.

The only thing that matters in the Stanley Cup playoffs is the man between the pipes. You can't win an NBA championship without a dominant big man. You can't win in the NFL without establishing the run. Offense puts fannies in the seats; defense wins championships. You've got to have pitching if you're going to make it through the postseason. We just need to go out there and take care of business. It all just comes down to execution. You can't leave anything on the table. We need to bring it. We need to dig deeper than we've ever dug before. We just gotta go out tomorrow and have fun. They've battled back from the brink of elimination. They're down but not out. They're in a must-win situation. They need a win to stave off elimination. Lose and go home. There's no tomorrow. I know it's a cliché, but we just have to take it one game at a time.

We gotta stick to the basics. We need to remember what got us here. You gotta dance with who brought you. This is it. This is for all the marbles. They need to keep up their intensity. They have to stay focused. They have to get after it. They have to rise to the occasion. They've got tremendous mental toughness. They're a blue-collar team. They're overachievers. They've come out of nowhere. They're a real Cinderella story. They have to stay hungry. They're loaded for bear.

The city has rallied around this team. We've got die-hard fans. We feed off the energy of our fans. Our fans are our twelfth man. We've got the greatest fans in the world.

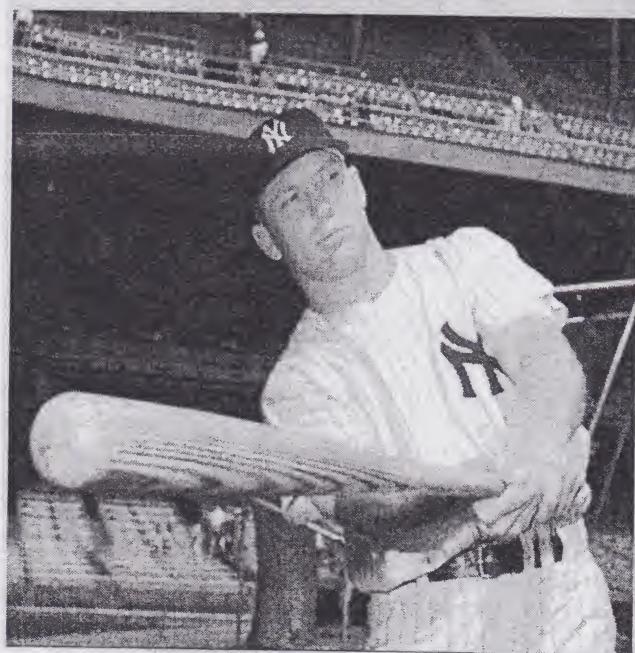
We're happy to be in the post-season and now we want to go out there and do some damage. We're capable of going deep in the post-season. We're not just happy to be here. This team has a chance to do something special. Hopefully, we can steal one on the road. In the playoffs, anything can happen.

Game time.

The fans are on their feet. This crowd is going wild. This place is a madhouse. This place is pandemonium. You can feel the electricity. Ya gotta love these fans. You gotta love this game.

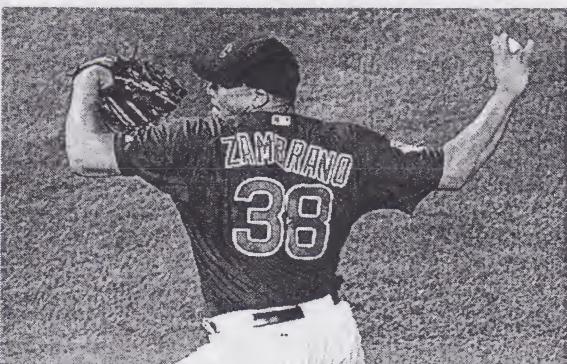
Mickey Mantle's Mistress by Michael Baker

Is it always my fault if the meat
is too rare, the wine still corked?
Even in my foothold in the sheets
I dream of sundaes and earthquakes,
not these baseball bats of sterling silver.
There's no line between desire and despair:
Cleveland has already made that mistake.
You say that older players also feed
on manuals, suntan lotion, and dusty statistics,
that like soldiers they are alone,
stripping others near warming showers
and sleeping until noon,
giving away broken shoelaces for parting gifts.
I see only wrinkles and smoky voodoo
and won't learn how to live here there.
I think now I may let you both go
for my knees ache: I'm going to squat
and piss on your pinstriped knick-knacks
and in my will leave my underwear
to wives, the dirty parts highlighted.
For you, I'll give back your damned jockstrap: too bad
Jesus left his penis on the cross.



From Z to Z by Jonnie Whoa Oh

Here at *Zisk* we embrace the last letter of the alphabet, so here's my team of players whose last name starts with Z. Most have been chosen because of their statistics, some have been chosen because of their funny names. In all fairness this squad wouldn't do much damage (Todd Zeile batting clean up, what is this the Mets?) unless it was against a team where everyone's last name started with X (there hasn't been an MLB player whose last name began with the 24th letter). The starting rotation is rounded out by Unknown Zay whose first name isn't Unknown but rather there was no record of it and he was just some guy named Zay who pitched two innings for the 1886 Baltimore Orioles and gave up four hits and walked four. Anyone just named Zay can be my #5 any day of the week. I challenge anyone to come up with a better team with all players starting with Z or a team with funnier names.



Barry Zito (2000 to September 16, 2004) SP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|
| 72 | 39 | 149 | 149 | 956 | 0 | 810 | 402 | 359 | 92 | 365 | 757 | 3.38 |

Tom Zachary (1918 to 1936) SP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|--------|----|------|------|------|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 186 | 191 | 533 | 409 | 3126.3 | 22 | 3580 | 1552 | 1295 | 119 | 914 | 720 | 3.73 |

Geoff Zahn (1973 to 1985) SP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|----|------|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|------|
| 111 | 109 | 304 | 270 | 1849 | 1 | 1978 | 889 | 769 | 149 | 526 | 705 | 3.74 |

Carlos Zambrano (2000 to September 16, 2004) SP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|----|----|----|----|-----|----|-----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|
| 31 | 29 | 97 | 76 | 513 | 0 | 441 | 220 | 188 | 32 | 237 | 429 | 3.30 |

Unknown Zay (1886) SP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|---|---|---|----|----|----|---|---|----|----|----|----|------|
| 0 | 1 | 1 | 1 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 4 | 2 | 0 | 4 | 2 | 9.00 |

Dom Zanni (1958 to 1966) RP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|---|---|-----|----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|-----|------|
| 9 | 6 | 111 | 3 | 183 | 10 | 155 | 89 | 77 | 20 | 85 | 108 | 3.79 |

Chink Zachary (1944) RP

| W | L | G | GS | IP | SV | H | R | ER | HR | BB | SO | ERA |
|---|---|---|----|------|----|----|----|----|----|----|----|------|
| 0 | 2 | 4 | 2 | 10.3 | 0 | 10 | 11 | 11 | 2 | 7 | 3 | 9.58 |

Rollie Zeider (1910 to 1918) 1st

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|-----|------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|-----|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 941 | 3210 | 393 | 769 | 89 | 22 | 5 | 253 | 223 | 0 | 334 | 138 | .240 | .315 |

Don Zimmer (1954 to 1965) 2nd

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|------|------|-----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 1095 | 3283 | 353 | 773 | 130 | 22 | 91 | 352 | 45 | 25 | 246 | 678 | .235 | .290 |

Paul Zuvella (1982 to 1991) SS

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|-----|-----|----|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| 209 | 491 | 41 | 109 | 17 | 2 | 2 | 20 | 2 | 0 | 34 | 50 | .222 | .275 |



Todd Zeile (1989 to September 19, 2004) 3rd

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|------|------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|------|----|----|-----|------|------|------|
| 2145 | 7547 | 985 | 1999 | 396 | 23 | 252 | 1105 | 53 | 51 | 943 | 1275 | .265 | .346 |

Dave Zearfoss (1896 to 1898, 1904 to 1905) C

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|----|-----|----|----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|----|----|------|------|
| 72 | 202 | 15 | 42 | 3 | 3 | 0 | 17 | 2 | 0 | 19 | 5 | .208 | .279 |

Dutch Zwilling (1910, 1914 to 1916) OF

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|-----|------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 366 | 1280 | 167 | 364 | 76 | 15 | 30 | 202 | 46 | 0 | 128 | 139 | .284 | .351 |

Guy Zinn (1911 to 1915) OF

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|-----|------|-----|-----|----|----|----|-----|----|----|-----|----|------|------|
| 314 | 1103 | 136 | 297 | 51 | 23 | 15 | 139 | 28 | 0 | 109 | 77 | .269 | .338 |



Richie Zisk (1971 to 1984) OF

| G | AB | R | H | 2B | 3B | HR | RBI | SB | CS | BB | SO | BA | OBP |
|------|------|-----|------|-----|----|-----|-----|----|----|-----|-----|------|------|
| 1453 | 5144 | 681 | 1477 | 245 | 26 | 207 | 792 | 8 | 15 | 533 | 910 | .287 | .353 |

They Make the Call

"I think I might like George Bush better."

— An anonymous Red Sox Fan on Tim McCarver

Baseball fans are not only passionate about their teams, they're also very passionate about their baseball announcers (as evidenced by the quote above). In this age where players change teams with regularity, announcers usually stay the same. While it's highly unlikely that now a play-by-play announcer will be with a team as long as Hall of Famers Ernie Harwell (Detroit Tigers) or the late, great Bob Murphy (New York Mets), many current announcers have been with their teams for more than a decade, which is long enough for fans to link the best and worst of their teams with that person's voice.

Five years ago in the very first issue of *Zisk* I penned a piece rating the best baseball studio hosts and play by play and color announcers. Unfortunately my attempt at judging the best was flawed—simply by the fact that I couldn't possibly have heard every TV announcer out there without living in every baseball market for a few weeks in one season. This year all of that changed, as I was finally able to get digital cable in my sleepy little area of Brooklyn (thanks a lot, you overcharging Cablevision bastards) and I decided to take the plunge and subscribe to the MLB Extra Innings package. For 149 bucks spread over four months, I could watch almost every game (well, at least parts of every game) every day of the week—except Saturdays when FOX had national broadcast rights. The first week of having this package I watched parts of 37 different games. It was heaven. And it also led me to rethink my analysis from five years ago. So with that in mind, here is an updated list of the worst and best announcing teams covering America's national past time.

The Worst

5) Bill Brown, Jim Deshaies FSN Southwest (Houston Astros)

These two jokers deserve to call a team that has that jackass Roger Clemens. The way these two guys talk, you'd think Jimy Williams or Phil Garner were going to call them in pinch hit ("We gotta score here," "We need a good pitch here"). The only reason they aren't higher on the list will become readily apparent to most when you read the next four.

by Steve Reynolds

4) Skip Carey, Joe Simpson Turner South, TBS (Atlanta Braves)

Is it possible than two guys could make a ball game sound more boring—and sound so pompous while doing it? (Wait, maybe team # 2 does) They have such a stuck up attitude about their team that I want to punch my TV.

3) Ken Harrelson, Darrin Jackson FSN Chicago (Chicago White Sox)

These two are the worse home rooters in baseball. I heard one of them say the following during a game against the Minnesota Twins (I am not making this up): "It's 9 to 7 bad guys, but we got two more pops at them." Holy crap, do these guys even know the term objectivity?

2) Michael Kay, Ken Singleton YES (New York Yankees)

If you've heard Kay's home run call when the Yanks win a game, you know why he's here. And Singleton's mumbling will make a coke head fall to sleep in less than 30 seconds



1) Fran Healy, Keith Hernandez, FSN New York (New York Mets)

It's not bad enough that my favorite team has sucked for four consecutive seasons after getting beat by the Yankees in the World Series. We Met fans also have to deal with Healy's spelling out the obvious inning after inning and Hernandez telling us why he's better than every hitter on the field. I think it's no coincidence that when Ted Robinson (the normal play-by-play man) went on leave for the Olympics and the U.S. Open in Tennis and left these two—along with pregame host Matt Laughlin—to do all the Mets games that the team went into their free fall. Thank

goodness we have a great radio team (Gary Cohen and Howie Rose) that knows Mets history and knows how to entertain when the team is sucking.

The Best

5) Daron Sutton, Bill Schroeder, FSN North (Milwaukee Brewers)

Covering Brewers games for years would probably suck the life out of anyone, but somehow Sutton and Schroeder still have a genuine enthusiasm for every facet from the game. Whether it's sterling defensive play (which the Brew crew have made with surprising regularity) or a well executed hit and run, it's readily apparent that these guys appreciate quality baseball, no matter which team is making the great play. The only minus for this duo is how much they act like homers—Sutton has a tendency to sprinkle his play-by-play with "we" a bit too much. But when the Mets played the Brewers in Milwaukee, I wished I could be listening to Sutton root for his team (out of town broadcasts of game against NY teams are blacked out).

4) Greg Papa, Ray Fosse FSN Bay Area (Oakland A's)

I haven't gotten the opportunity to watch more than five games Papa and Fosse have called. But even after just one game you can tell these two have worked together for a while and operate like well oiled pitching machine. Their voices are so soothing I feel like I'm in California watching the game. (Except I don't have to fear someone from the Texas Rangers throwing a chair at me.)



3) Don Orsillo, Jerry Remy NESN (Boston Red Sox)

When you have to call a cursed team, you have to make sure you've got a good sense of humor, and these two have a great sense of humor. These two have no problem telling humorous stories that embarrass themselves while they're waiting for Nomah to do his 86 motions while at bat—I especially loved the time Remy talked about leaving the parking brake on in their rental minivan while driving from San Francisco to Oakland. During one game against the lowly Tampa Bay Devil Rays Orsillo and Remy were visited by the comedians Dennis Leary and Lenny Clarke, who were at Fenway to promote a charity event. These four riffed on



baseball, facial hair and so many different topics I thought they should get their own morning show on a radio station somewhere. And by the way, Orsillo and Remy also have a great eye for detail when calling a game, picking out the small things that make a difference between winning and losing.

2) Thom Brenneman, Joe Garagiola FSN Arizona (Arizona Diamondbacks)

Brenneman and Garagiola don't work together that often (ex-D-back Mark Grace is usually the color man), and nepotism is definitely behind Garagiola's position (his son is the D-backs GM). But there's a reason these two have both been on national baseball telecasts (Joe obviously for a much longer time)—they're damn good. Brenneman has great knack for capturing the flow of a game and setting up his partners to make good points, while the approaching-80-years-old Garagiola still has the smarts that made him a staple of NBC's *Game of the Week* while I was growing up. Too bad FOX didn't have these two guys work playoff games together.

1) Vin Scully, FSN West 2 (Los Angeles Dodgers)



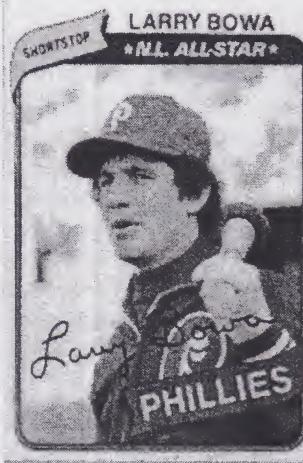
What else can be said about the Hall of Fame voice that moved from Brooklyn with the Dodgers? Scully's national work for NBC is imprinted in my memories of the Bill Buckner play in the '86 World Series ("A little

roller...behind the bag. It's through Buckner! Knight comes in and the Mets win it!) and Kirk Gibson's home run in 1988 ("In a year that has been so improbable, the impossible has happened!"), but I'm sure any Dodger fan would have a list of memories a mile long of that quintessential American voice. It stunned me at first that Scully still works solo all these years after his radio days, but somehow he makes it work. His preparation is still immaculate—he always seems to come up with some odd anecdote about a player from the other team that boggles my mind. I wonder if Dodger fans know how lucky they are to still have a connection to their glorious past.

The Worst Baseball Trades of My Lifetime

by Josh Rutledge

I still remember that evening in January 1982. I was at my grandparents' house, and my cousin Ashley came bounding down the stairs in the foulest of moods. Homicidal rage was written all over his face. I tried to say hello to him, but he was in no frame of mind for



pleasantries. "The Phillies just traded **Larry Bowa** for that Puerto Rican guy on the Cubs!", barked Ashley. Phillies fandom was a religion in the Rutledge family, so this was serious business. I swore there was steam coming out of Ashley's nostrils. It was bad enough that the Phils had already broken up their longtime nucleus by selling

Bob Boone to the California Angels. But the trading away of fan-favorite

Bowa seemed absolutely unfathomable. Phillies fans everywhere—my cousin included—were dismayed beyond belief. I'd never seen a 10-year-old so irate before. (A year later, Ashley and I got into a near fistfight in the Baseball Hall of Fame gift shop, but that's a story for another time and place.)



Looking back, it's easy to understand my cousin's anger over that Bowa deal—but not for reasons that were apparent at the time. What made the deal so disastrous was the fact that the Phils "threw in" future superstar Ryne Sandberg, and all they got in return was light-hitting shortstop Ivan DeJesus. Today, we Phillies fans look upon that trade as the beginning of the end, the day that a once-

proud team set into place an organizational collapse that would culminate in 14 losing seasons over a 16-year-period. A year later, five players (including future all-star Julio Franco) were dealt to the Cleveland Indians in exchange for overhyped underachiever Von Hayes. It's still painful to envision what could have been. Sandberg, Franco and Mike Schmidt in the same infield? I better

stop before I begin to weep!

For years, I assumed that no baseball trade in history (with the possible exception of the infamous **Lou Brock-for-Ernie Broglio swap**) could have been considered worse than the Phillies' disastrous Sandberg handout. It seemed inconceivable that another organization could be so historically incompetent. But as I started to think about the matter some more, I realized that immeasurably awful deals have been made by *many* teams. Sometimes those teams got burned because they swapped top-tier prospects for short-term fixes. Sometimes those teams got burned because their new acquisitions didn't perform as well as expected. And sometimes those teams got burned because they were...just plain stupid! Here, then, is my list of the very worst of the worst baseball trades. I'm limiting this discussion to deals made in my lifetime (1971 to present). Enjoy!

12. July 31, 1997: The Oakland Athletics trade Mark McGwire to the St. Louis Cardinals for Eric Ludwick, T.J. Mathews, and Blake Stein



Deadline deals almost always benefit teams that trade pricey veterans on the eve of free agency for top-line prospects. If you "rent" a free-agent-bound, 33-year-old star for two months and your team still finishes in fourth place, your deadline deal is

gonna look really, really bad...unless you're the 1997 St. Louis Cardinals and you've just stolen Mark McGwire from the A's in exchange for three scrubs. New arrival McGwire belted 24 home runs in just 51 games for the '97 Cards, and the St. Louis brass was able to convince him to re-sign at season's end. The rest is history: a major league record 70 home runs in 1998, and 65 more in 1999. And all three guys the A's got in that deal are already out of baseball.

11. July 29, 1989: The Texas Rangers trade Sammy Sosa, Scott Fletcher, and Wilson Alvarez to the Chicago White Sox for Harold Baines and Fred Manrique



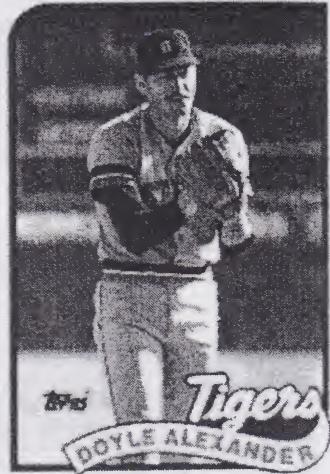
15-game-winner for the Sox. But it's not like the White Sox made out like bandits themselves—they ended up swapping Sosa for **George Bell** in 1992. Whoops!

10. August 12, 1987: The Detroit Tigers trade John Smoltz to the Atlanta Braves for Doyle Alexander

It's hard to be *too* critical of the Tigers in regards to this deal. They were in a pennant race and needed an ace for their rotation; Alexander gave them just that. After arriving in Detroit in '87, Alexander went 9-0 with a 1.53 ERA, leading the Tigers to an AL East crown. But the Tigers choked in the playoffs, losing to a Minnesota Twins team that had only won 85 regular season games. The overachieving Twins went on to win the World Series, while the Tigers were stuck with a 37-year-old pitcher. Alexander won 14 games for the Tigers in '88, but that doesn't even begin to compare to what Smoltz proceeded to do for Atlanta: he won 14 or more games

seven times in 11 years, notched a Cy Young Award, won an incredible 12 postseason games, recorded 100 saves between 2002 and 2003, and made the All-Star game six times.

9. June 15, 1983: The St. Louis Cardinals trade Keith Hernandez to the New York Mets for Neil Allen and Rick Ownbey



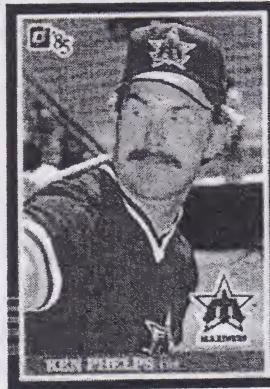
As I recall, there were rumors that the Cards dealt Hernandez because he was (allegedly) a cokehead. But it was the St. Louis front office that must have been on crack, dealing a five-time gold Glover and career .296 hitter for mediocre pitcher Allen. Allen went 20-16 in three years for the Cardinals and was sold to the Yankees in 1985. Throw-in Ownbey pitched a total of 61.2 innings for the Cards. With the Mets, former NL MVP Hernandez continued to play at a superstar level, winning six more gold gloves and hitting .290 or higher six seasons in a row. Can you imagine the world champion '86 Mets without Keith Hernandez?

8. July 21, 1988: The New York Yankees trade Jay Buhner, Troy Evers, and Rich Balabon to the Seattle Mariners for Ken Phelps

Conversation from an episode of *Seinfeld*:

Frank Costanza: "What the hell did you trade Jay Buhner for?!? He had 30 home runs, over 100 RBIs last year, he's got a rocket for an arm, you don't know what the hell you're doin'!!"

George Steinbrenner: "Well, Buhner was a good prospect, no question about it. But my baseball people love Ken Phelps' bat. They kept saying 'Ken Phelps, Ken Phelps, Ken Phelps.' "



Did this deadline deal help the Yankees make the playoffs? No, they finished in fifth place! Phelps, a 34-year-old DH, played 131 total games for the Yankees, who then traded him for Scott Holcomb (who?). Buhner blossomed in Seattle, finishing his career with 310 home runs including three straight seasons of at least 40 homers and 100 RBI.

7. November 19, 1993: The Los Angeles Dodgers trade Pedro Martinez to the Montreal Expos for Delino DeShields



stuff. But he was perceived, apparently, to be "too thin" to hold up as a starter, and the Dodgers needed help at second base. Given the chance to start with the Expos (and later the Red Sox), Martinez gradually developed into the greatest starting pitcher of his generation, winning three Cy Young Awards, notching five ERA titles, striking out more than 2500 batters, and posting a 2.58 career ERA. Base-stealing specialist DeShields played three years for LA, never hit higher than .256, and then left for free agency.

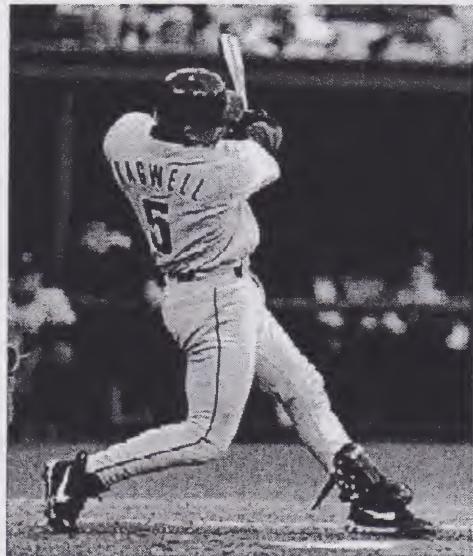
6. January 27, 1982: The Philadelphia Phillies trade Larry Bowa and Ryne Sandberg to the Chicago Cubs for Ivan DeJesus

Ah yes, the infamous Sandberg deal! Former Phillies

exec./manager Dallas Green was now the Cubs' GM, and he knew that Sandberg was a star-in-the-making. The Phillies wanted to "upgrade" at shortstop and envisioned DeJesus as a slick-fielding, solid-hitting type. Green took an aging Larry Bowa in return for DeJesus but demanded Sandberg as a throw-in. And the rest is history. DeJesus played three years for the Phils, never hitting higher than .257 and making an unpardonable 29 errors in 1984. He was dealt to St. Louis in 1985 to make room for the very terrible Steve Jeltz. Bowa played four seasons for the Cubs. And Sandberg? He played 16 seasons for the Cubs, winning nine straight gold gloves, belting 282 homeruns, and winning the NL MVP award in 1984.

5. August 30, 1990: The Boston Red Sox trade Jeff Bagwell to the Houston Astros for Larry Anderson

Granted, Anderson was terrific for Boston (22 innings pitched, only three earned runs allowed), and his stellar relief work down the stretch helped to land the Sox an AL East crown. But the Sox didn't win it



all, and Anderson left via free agency at season's end. For 22 innings' worth of Larry Anderson, Boston gave up Jeff Bagwell, one of the greatest players of the 1990s. Bagwell, a career .300 hitter, has hit over 400 home runs and has topped the 100-RBI mark on eight occasions. He was the NL Rookie of the Year in 1991 and the NL MVP in 1994.

4. October 21, 1981: The New York Yankees trade Willie McGee to the St. Louis Cardinals for Bob Sykes

Man, George, you've made some bad deals! Lord knows why the Yankees were so eager to get Sykes, a lifetime sub-.500 pitcher with a 4.65 career ERA. He never

pitched an inning for the Yankees, and McGee went on to an illustrious career with the Cards. In 18 big league seasons, he hit .295, stole 352 bases, won two batting titles, notched 2254 hits, won three Gold Gloves, and captured an NL MVP award. For my money, he was probably the most underrated player of his time.

3. January 10, 1991: The Baltimore Orioles trade Steve Finley, Pete Harnisch, and Curt Schilling to the Houston Astros for Glenn Davis



At the time, this looked like a great deal for the Orioles. Glenn Davis was one of the game's preeminent power hitters and hadn't yet turned 30. From 1986-89, he averaged 31 home runs per season (and 30 home runs back then was like 40 today!); three times he finished in the top ten for NL MVP voting. But his career with the O's was an absolute

bust. He hit just 24 home runs over the course of three injury-plagued seasons and was released in September of 1993. And the three up-and-comers that Baltimore gave up to get Davis all blossomed into fine big leaguers. Harnisch posted double-digit-win seasons four times. Finley has racked up over 2000 career hits and won four gold gloves. And Curt Schilling? All he did was make five all-star games, win two strikeout crowns, post two 20-win seasons, share a World Series MVP award, and win 17 games for a 1997 Phillies team that went 64-98. Imagine if how great this deal would have turned out for Houston if the following trade had never been made...



2. April 2, 1992: The Houston Astros trade Curt Schilling to the Philadelphia Phillies for Jason Grimsley

This one almost made up for the Sandberg deal. The Phillies got future superstar Schilling (a reliever with the Astros) in exchange for marginal prospect Grimsley, who won a total of 35 games in 12 big league seasons, compiling a dismal career ERA of 4.81. Someone in the Astros' scouting department definitely should have received a beating.

1. December 10, 1971: The New York Mets trade Nolan Ryan, Frank Estrada, Don Rose, and LeRoy Stanton to the California Angels for Jim Fregosi

It is entirely impossible to figure out what the heck the Mets were thinking when they made this deal! Fregosi was a fading star coming off of his tenth season (in which he hit just .233). To get him, the Mets dealt four players, one of whom ended up becoming the greatest power



pitcher in the history of baseball. Stanton was a solid player with the Angels for five years, and Nolan Ryan was...Nolan Ryan! Fregosi hit .232 and .234 in two seasons with the Mets, who sold him to Texas in 1973. Unbelievable.

Josh Rutledge, descendant of exiled English horse thieves and Southern moonshiners, was born in 1971 in York, Pennsylvania. He began rooting for the Philadelphia Phillies soon after. Since 1998, he has been the editor of Now Wave Magazine. When he's not working for The Man, he enjoys eating Mexican food, reading Kurt Vonnegut novels, listening to sportstalk radio, collecting power pop records, taunting Yankee fans, and throwing furniture at his neighbors. His favorite ballplayer is still Bobby Abreu. His least favorite? J.D. Drew, of course!

Clemens is Still a Wiener and Other Thoughts That Occurred to Me While Watching the 2004 All-Star Game by Lisa Alcock

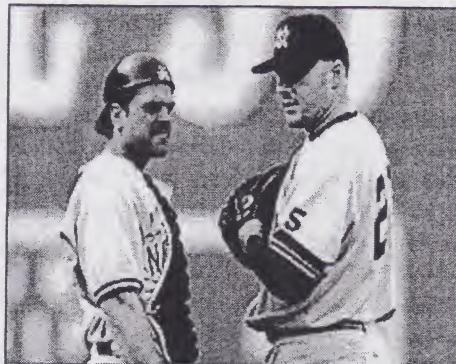
The idea for this article came about after an e-mail discussion with my good friend **Kip**. I'd inquired if he was going to watch this year's All-Star game, his response: "You bet. I cannot wait to see **Clemens** and **Piazza** as battery mates." I read that statement and for a brief moment I had blocked the reality of Clemens in the National League. Then, reality came back and hit me in the face like a frying pan: 'Oh crap, now I have to root for Roger' (even though I would never do such a ridiculous thing). And, 'Oh my God! This game has so much comic potential!' This is the conversation that transpired between Kip and myself

Me: "I hope Roger remembers to *not* throw at Mike's head. I hope he remembers they're on the same team. Oh to be a fly on the wall in the dugout..."

Kip: "I don't think there will be any pitcher-catcher meeting before the game to discuss strategy."

[Laughs]

Me: "Yeah Mike will skip that. Though, a conference on the mound might be funny..."



In an article I read about Piazza and Clemens on Yahoo Sports the day of the game, Piazza is quoted as saying, "I don't know if we're going to be playing golf

anytime soon...But we've got a job to do." Clemens added: "It's not that big a deal. It's not an issue." Roger also said, "I'm glad I'm throwing to (Piazza) and I don't have to face him." (Yes, I'm sure you are, you moron. Though I'm sure you can afford another \$50,000 fine). So, the comic potential at this year's game was definitely there. You know what have been really funny? Seeing Piazza give Clemens the finger while giving him signals

before the pitch. Oh, a girl can dream, can't she? But all joking aside I wondered: how can I want my league to win and not root for Clemens at the same time?¹ Ugh. Oh the horror. What follows is my play-by-play of the 2004 All-Star Game:

I'm watching the All-Star game at my boyfriend **Alec**'s house. He's totally not interested in baseball and will probably tune out my ranting at the TV during the game.

Oh God. **Joe Buck** and **Tim McCarver** are covering the game. I should have known. Please kill me now. Why couldn't Fox have gotten **Ernie Harwell** or **George Kell** and **Al Kaline** to cover the game? I guess that's too much to ask.

8:45 pm: Starting player introductions. I boo and hiss when the camera pans to Clemens warming up in the bullpen. (Poor Alec)

8:55 pm: Top of the first. Roger has two outs...the American League is up by three runs. A small part of me giggled with glee when **Manny Ramirez** got an home run off Roger. The inning seemed to drag on for an eternity. Joe Buck commented, "And this nightmare isn't ending for Clemens." (Why thanks, Joe, for that astute observation. You can always count on certain broadcasters to point out the obvious.) It is a 30-plus pitches first inning for Clemens. The score is 6-0; let's hope the National League bats can catch up.

9:04 pm: Pujols gets a double...and, man, I thought it was out of the park!

9:08 pm: Joe Buck has just announced that both **Jack McKeon** and **Jimy Williams** decide that Roger is done for the game! I say, "Well, it looks like I can now watch and enjoy the game. My work here is done." As I type I

¹Perhaps I can pull it off the same way I've not yet rooted for **Karim Garcia** while watching the Mets. You do recall the bullpen "incident" last year at Fenway in which Garcia was involved with a Red Sox grounds keeper, right? (Garcia was traded to the Orioles for reliever **Mike DeJean** on July 19th.)

start laughing out loud. I read the previous sentence to Alec and he says, "You're really amusing yourself, aren't you?" "Well, yes, of course I am" I reply. "Roger has just written my article for me."

9:34 pm: Top of the third, Piazza is still in the game. Priceless.

After that, it's all a blur to me.

Okay, okay, I admit I didn't watch the entire game (besides, who the hell can stay awake that long?). In the end I was able to root for my league and not have to worry about Clemens. Clemens pitched horribly. Perhaps he had an off night, or, perhaps we witnessed a little thing called Karma in action. And by the way, why did **Bud Selig** have to present Clemens with that award? He wasn't pitching well that night and Houston is 44-44 as I write this. It would have been nice to wake up this morning to see the National League had won, but they didn't. They haven't won since what, 1996? So the Red Sox bats helped the Yankees gain home field advantage. Whatever. I got my wish, Clemens had a wretched performance. I had fun watching the game and all the random players I like to follow (**Mulder**, **Pujols**, **Guerrero**, etc.) and will watch next year. Hopefully **Scooter** (see below) will be dead by then.

Here are some other random game notes:

- During the pre-game ceremonies, was I the only one who really wanted **Ali** to punch **Jeter** on the other side of his jaw so he could have a matching scar?
- Joe Buck and Tim McCarver both note when **Pudge** comes up to bat, "**Ivan Rodriguez** really enjoys the music of **Yanni**." (Huh??!) Alec and I looked at each other and cracked up when Joe adds "Somewhere **Pat Morita** is weeping..." in regards to hearing the music of Yanni as a backdrop to Pudge's home run. (And I thought Joe and Tim weren't funny!).
- Scooter, the animated talking baseball who informed us about curveballs and sliders, needs to die a slow, painful death. He's as irritating as the Pillsbury Dough Boy™ and that creepy Snuggie™ teddy bear.
- I really liked the MasterCard commercial with the Red Sox fans. They were asked 'What would you pay

to see the Red Sox in the World Series?' Responses included "my first born," "my girlfriend," and "my salary."

Oh, and I also watched a little bit of the Home Run Derby on Monday night. The funniest moment had to have been when I saw my hero, **Hank Aaron**, sitting in the stands looking at his cell phone, as if he was text messaging

someone. I wondered if he was texting **Frank Robinson**. Perhaps he was telling Frank how much he didn't want to be interviewed by the annoying **Chris "I'm in Desperate Need of a Good Haircut" Berman**. And speaking of Frank, I think he could be **Robert Guillaume**'s (of *Soap*, *Benson* and countless films fame)

twin brother. Every time I see Frank I think that **Jessica**, **Chester**, **Burt**, and **Mary** (and the rest of *Soap*'s characters) can't be too far behind.

(Author's update: After Roger's horrid performance (much to my glee) Kip informed me that he believed it was Mikey who threw the game for Roger. Kip actually thinks that Mike told the batters beforehand what pitches Roger was going to throw. I shook my head and laughed at Kip when he told me of his conspiracy theory. Man, I love my friend... but I think he might be certifiable. Hello, Bellevue?)

Much has happened to Lisa Alcock since Zisk #8. By the time this issue is published she will have moved in with her boyfriend, Alec, pursued another job, watched her brother graduate from ICP (International Center of Photography), and suffered through another horrible Mets season (groans). Also of note: the softball team, on which she plays, The Pubs, went to the playoffs this season but lost in the third round and took second place overall in their division. While it is college football season, the author maintains that she has not lost interest in baseball and looks forward to the playoffs and to the Yankees losing yet another World Series (but let's hope they don't even make it that far). You can read her (almost) daily ramblings on her new website: socgrrl.squarespace.com.



They Called Him Spaceman

by Tim Hinely

Over the years major league baseball has seen its share of characters, many who resided on the mound: Luis Tiant with his unusual wind-up and huge cigars he would chomp on after the game, Mark "The Bird" Fidrych talking to baseballs, and of course the late Tug McGraw with his goofy faces and requisite glove slapping against his thigh. But perhaps no one had given baseball fans and reporters alike more chin-scratching or odd looks than Bill "Spaceman" Lee.

Lee, a lefty, was born on December 28, 1946 in Burbank,



California and he stayed nearby to attend the University of Southern California (USC—odd since it's a very conservative school and Lee is anything but conservative). Lee came from a sports playing family as his grandfather played for the Los Angeles team in the early

1900s, his brother was a two-sport player and his aunt, Annabelle, pitched the first perfect game in the history of the Women's Semi-pro Hardball league.

At USC Lee made a name for himself by shagging flies in the outfield in his jock strap and, more importantly, leaving with a 38-8 record (at the time a USC record for most wins). After bouncing around the minors for a few years he made his major league debut on June 25, 1969.

Lee got his nickname early in his career from Red Sox teammate John Kennedy following a radio interview in which Lee spoke more of the moon and planets than he did of his baseball skills. And also, keep in mind that he played or most of his career with the Boston Red Sox, one of the most conservative and straight-laced teams in all of baseball. To the horror of some Boston baseball fans, he would occasionally trot out onto the field in such disguises as a gas mask, a Daniel Boone cap or a propeller beanie. Yup, he was an odd one all right but Lee didn't think much of his behavior was odd. He agreed

that while it might be a bit strange for baseball that he was "basically normal in real life." He disagreed with the "Spaceman" tag and instead wanted to be called "Earthman" and wasn't all that hot on posing for the cover of *Sports Illustrated* (or his biography) in an astronaut's outfit.



And, of course, Lee became the oddball of the Boston media by pontificating on such topics as the rape of our planet Earth, zero population growth and the relationship between mysticism and baseball. He also took ginseng, wondered aloud about the Bermuda Triangle and read the much-more-liberal-back-then, *Rolling Stone*. To the more radical college students of Boston, Lee was a bit of a folk hero but to the many old-time Bostonians he was just plain weird.

Lee did have talent too—he won 17 games three seasons in a row (1973-1975). In the now-legendary '75 World Series between the Sox and the Cincinnati Reds, Lee lost game 3 in the 9th inning but was then asked him to pitch in game 6. After a few days of rain delay management reconsidered their decision and instead went with Luis Tiant, which lead to Lee starting game 7. Lee carried a lead into the 7th when Reds slugger Tony Perez, who he had previously struck out on Lee's infamous "eephus" pitch, came to the plate. Lee tried to sneak across another "eephus," but Perez sent it over the Green Monster. The Sox lost the series and Lee immediately headed for China.

He was always at odds with Red Sox management and especially with Sox manager **Don Zimmer**. Lee once



referred to Zimmer as "the designated Gerbil" and also once called him "a front-running son of a bitch." Lee had spent nearly 10 years



with the Sox when he was shipped off to the Montreal Expos in 1979. For his inauguration into Canadian life he grew a long beard. But one of Lee's most memorable moments came when the Expos were playing the Red Sox in Boston during spring training. When a reporter

finally ask him about drug use Lee replied, "Reefer madness, hemp, doobies?? Oh yeah, I've been using that stuff since 1968. I've never had any problems with it." The following day the sports headlines read **LEE SMOKES POT**. When questioned by a member of the commissioner's office Lee replied, "I don't smoke pot, I use it. I have these organic buckwheat pancakes and I sprinkle about a half ounce of marijuana on them and eat 'em." For this he was fined \$250 and donated \$251 to an Eskimo charity.

Lee had a few injuries during his career, one of which came during the now-infamous **Carlton Fisk/Lou Pinella** brawl in 1976 when Lee jumped in and got pounded by both **Mickey Rivers** and **Graig Nettles**. Then, while playing for Montreal in 1979 (and having a solid 16-10 season), he got hit by a car while jogging. After a few years of complaining about the injury and complaining even more about being scapegoated and the trading of his pal **Rodney Scott**, Lee was released by the Expos. In doing so Expos owner **John McHale** told Lee he would never play in the major leagues again and Lee never did. Lee believes he was blackballed by McHale and said that McHale "put his name in a computer with **Shoeless Joe**, **Al Capone** and **Jack the Ripper**."

In the years after baseball, Lee ran for President as a member of the Rhinoceros Party. It was once proposed that **Hunter S. Thompson** be his running mate. He instead chose **Dick "The Monster" Radatz** and explained the virtues of mandatory drug testing: "I've

tested them *all*," Lee said, "But I don't think taking them should be mandatory." Joking aside, Lee felt taking psychedelic drugs was a major turning point for him. He felt that after taking them a person would "never vote Republican again and with the advent of knowledge you reach a whole other level of consciousness and can never go back again."

Lee definitely danced to his own drummer and was one of the most outrageous players to ever play the game. His behavior, more than likely scared the very conservative leaders of the major leagues and it's possible he was indeed blackballed. Still, the game *needs* people like Lee—people who shake up the status quo. But in this day



and age when the most radical thing is **Johnny Damon** growing his long, hideous hair, I'm afraid the days of the Lees, the Tians and the Tuggers are long gone. Lee was a good guy with a true hope for the planet and the human race and I think he summed it up best when he said that on his gravestone he never wanted it to be said "that I was responsible for the death of the late, great planet Earth."

(Author's Note: References for this article include *Oddballs* by **Bruce Shlain**, *Baseball Babylon* by **Dan Gutman**, *Baseball's Greatest Insults* by **Kevin Nelson** and various websites.)

Tim Hinely loves the Pittsburgh Pirates and lives in Portland, Oregon. He has been publishing his own zine, *Dagger*, for several years now. Send him \$3.50 to see a copy to: PO Box 820102 Portland, OR 97282-1102 or write at: daggerboy@prodigy.net.

Rants From the ~~Upper~~ Lower Deck by Steve Reynolds

For the first time since I've been writing *Rants From the Upper Deck* in *Zisk*, the title of this column isn't appropriate. Yes *Zisk* readers, I have seen how the other, richer half lives—I have sat directly behind home plate at a major league ballgame. As a matter of fact, I sat in the upper deck only once at a Met game this year, thanks to my good friend Jocelyn, who works at the Mets flagship radio station, WFAN. It seems that people with money to afford really good season tickets can't or don't use them all the time, which led to me seeing baseball games without needing oxygen. This year I sat in great free seats on the first base side, directly above the net behind home plate and the aforementioned home plate seats.

How does a baseball peasant approach sitting in these seats? By acting like a total fool, of course. I called my friend Joe and asked him to tape the game because we might be on T-V, and he asked, "How many rows back are you?" I replied, "None back," and then burst out into maniacal laughter. Myself, *Zisk* publisher Mike Faloon and our friend (and drummer extraordinaire) Pete Hayes cackled like kids getting out of school for the summer when we discovered there was waiter service at our seats...the same kind of seats that they started putting in the big "stadium" theaters a few years ago. I have never been so comfortable sitting through a three-hour game in my life. I never had to get up for anything—the waiter brought me seven-dollar beers, six-dollar chicken fingers, five-dollar fries and the largest bag of popcorn ever made. And all I had to do was sign the credit card receipt—oh yeah, he had a little machine on his belt to swipe my card. The only thing the waiter didn't offer to do was empty my bladder for me.

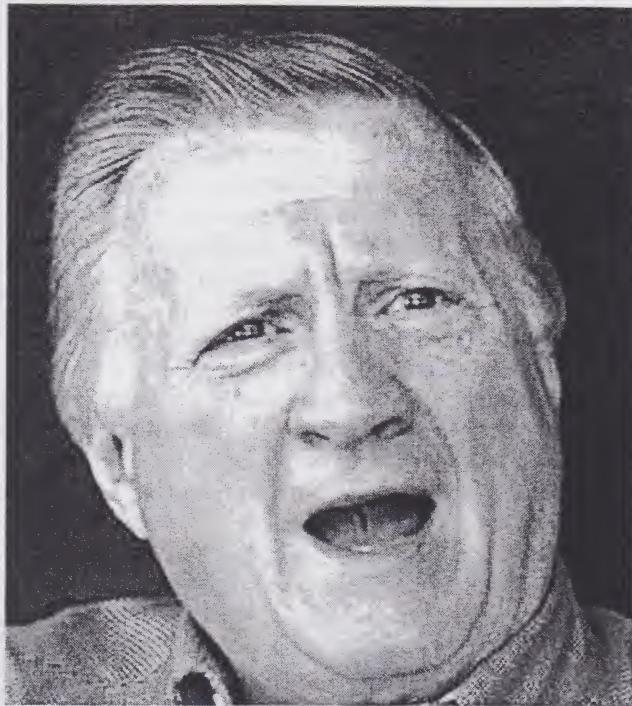
So you might wonder about the game itself. Who cares?!?! They bring you sushi with wasabi sauce to your seat—who needs to watch the game when something like that happens? Honestly, I don't even recall who won, but I do know that from behind home plate every ball that was hit hard seemed like it was destined to leave the park. And we were so close that when you spoke out to players, they could actually respond. Cliff Floyd had a rough at bat his first time up, and when he came up a second time I yelled out something like, "Don't let the fans get you down, you can do it." He then looked up at me, and then pointed the barrel of his bat right at me, and then went up and got a double. At that point, I should have taken over for Art Howe.

This season I also got to see how the semi-rich live in my borough of Brooklyn at Keyspan Park, the home of the Mets single A team the Brooklyn Cyclones. Through my friend Erik's connections with a beer baron, we got two tickets for the "Party Deck" on the top of the park. There is a long single row of seats right along the rail, so you can over look everything that's happening below. But



what is even better looking is the limitless supply of free American beer you get until the bottom of the seventh inning, which sits right alongside a huge table of hot dogs, chicken fingers, salads, cookies and many more foods I can't eat on my low-carb diet. Once again, the game seemed secondary to novelty aspects of where I was sitting. (By the way, I do remember that the Cyclones won that game.)

So what have I learned from this baseball season of great seats? No matter where you sit, George Steinbrenner still looks like an insensitive prick. The shabby treatment of the whole Hurricane Frances/Tampa Bay Devil Rays travel fiasco offended many fans, but the Boss did something that was even more offensive, yet much less reported. After the Yankees were thrashed by the Indians on August 31st, Steinbrenner ordered his minions to put up a bunch of silly inspirational messages on the scoreboards and on the big sign on the stadium's facade. When Jack Curry of the *New York Times* asked Howard Rubenstein, Steinbrenner's spokesman, why the messages had been placed around the stadium, the PR flack came back with a whopper of a response for King George:



"I wanted to show the fans that we have the same courage and the same attitudes all New Yorkers have had fighting back from that terrible episode on 9/11. New Yorkers never give up and the Yankees never give up."

I just about screamed out loud on the subway while reading this little statement. Baseball did help many people (this writer included) get over the initial shock of the first couple weeks after the attacks, but to insinuate that a 22-0 loss is even close to the same realm as almost 3,000 people dying is just plain offensive. I don't think anything Steinbrenner has said over the years has ticked me off more. I hope the man rots in hell and dies a horrible, long drawn out death because of some incredible painful and embarrassing disease.

Speaking of embarrassment, that's what I feel looking back upon at least two of my projections for the division winners. (The Royals? Was I smoking crack? Was I given the intelligence of our 43rd President for a day? What was I thinking?) In any case, it's much easier (and safer) to hand out our almost annual *Zisk Year End Awards*. (These aren't who I think will win, it's who I think should win.)

AL MVP: Gary Sheffield, New York Yankees. With apologies to my Red Sox and **David Ortiz** and **Manny Ramirez**, those guys didn't play with a separated

shoulder all season. As much as I hate the Yankees and everyone associated with them, I have a deep respect (and a burning sensation in the pit of my stomach) for what Sheffield has done this season—and he's eradicated all that baggage caused by his demands for trades from teams in the past. The Yankees would be even more of bust without **Dwight Gooden**'s nephew. (But I still hate him.)

AL Cy Young :
(Tie) **Johan Santana**, Minnesota Twins and **Curt Schilling**, Boston Red Sox. Would either one of these teams have locked up their playoff spots without these two guys? No way.



AL Manager of the Year: Mike Scoscia, Anaheim Angels. With amount of injuries this team had in the first half of the season, the fact that they were still in the race at the end of the season is a testament to the former catcher's ability to fit the right spare part into the right position.

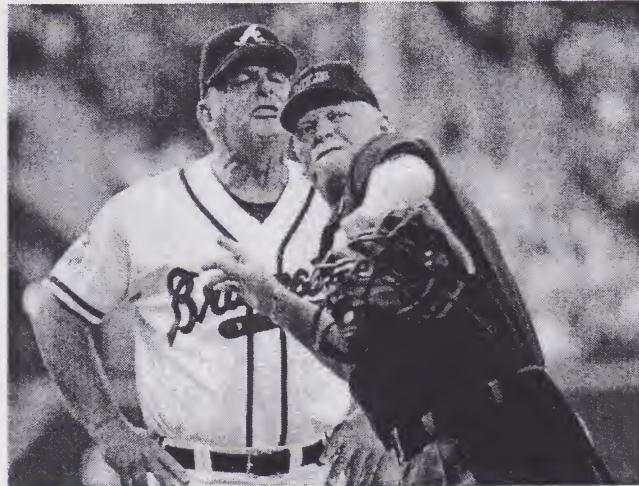
AL Least VP: Jason Giambi, New York Yankees. Okay, so the guy was sick and then had a benign tumor, but his secretive nature when it was finally diagnosed made him even more a distraction to a team with plenty of them.



NL MVP: Barry Bonds, San Francisco Giants. Really, how could anyone doubt this? He's still one of the biggest assholes of the game this side of **Ty Cobb**, but the

Giants are basically a one-man team (two when out next winner pitches).

NL Cy Young: Jason Schmidt, San Francisco Giants. Schmidt stumbled a bit after he hurt his groin, but that doesn't take away the fact that he delivered whenever called upon to keep the Giants in the playoff race.



NL Manager of the Year: Bobby Cox, Atlanta Braves. Again, I hate this team, but Bobby Cox's pact with the devil was at its highest level this year.

NL Least VP: Kaz Matsui, New York Mets. I was temporarily blinded by Matsui's big splash on opening day, but after a while my initial impressions from spring training were correct—this guy was the second coming of **Tsuyoshi Shinjo**.

Ah, the Mets. Back to where we started this column. What can be written about the Mets that hasn't already been said by most of the sports "journalists" in New York? 2004 was truly an odd year to be a Mets fan. For the first time in at least eight seasons, I had low expectations for the team. In the late '90s they got better each year, just missing the playoff two years in a row before getting in in '99 and then going all the way to the World Series in 2000. Those teams had an excitement about them—you never felt that someone trying to improve their fantasy league team assembled them. But the past three seasons were one bad decision after another (Mo Vaughan, Roberto Alomar anyone?).

However, as 2004's opening day approached I actually felt the Mets could avoid last place for a third consecutive

year. GM **Jim Duquette** seemed to have a great plan of mixing the team's youth with some newcomers that could actually catch the ball to play off the fact that Shea Stadium is still a pitcher's park. I couldn't wait to see **Mike Cameron** make some great defensive plays and to see Matsui and **Jose Reyes** become a middle infield destined for the Web Gems segment on *Baseball Tonight*. Heck, even **Peter Gammons**, whose baseball opinion I respect more than anyone's, said that the Mets had done a good job in the off season.

As we all know from the past few years, what looks good on paper doesn't always come together. Reyes got hurt for the 100th time, Matsui couldn't figure out how to play shortstop anymore and Cameron's struggles at the plate caused him to press too much on defense. Yet the Mets stayed in the race in the NL East until mid-July—and then Duquette blew apart his carefully constructed plan for the future. After saying this wasn't a "win now" year he traded a pile of youth for two pitchers that didn't have winning records, one of which could leave as a free agent (**Kris Benson**) and the other one with a gimpy arm (**Victor Zambrano**). What a jackass. Or maybe it's the **Wilpons** (both father and son) who are the jackasses. Perhaps they saw their chance for a division title (and a spot on the back pages of New York's tabloids) and ordered Duquette to make the trades. Every time I see **Scott Kazmir** pitch for the Devil Rays, I reach for a bottle of Pepto, as I know I'm not going to like how well he pitches while Zambrano and pitching coach **Rick Peterson** try to use some zen healing to make his arm whole again. Has there ever been an organization that has given up on so many talented players too early, only to watch them blossom into stars for other teams? Well maybe the Yankees, but they're definitely a distant second.



For me, the moral of the 2004 season is this—even if you get to look at shit up close, it stinks just as much as it does in the upper deck.

Steve Reynolds is the senior editor of Zisk, and has already sent in his application to be the Mets skipper next year—how could he do any worse?

Zisk Book Reviews

by Michael Baker

The Meaning of Ichiro: The New Wave From Japan and the Transformation of our National Pastime.

Robert Whiting. Warner Books, 2004.

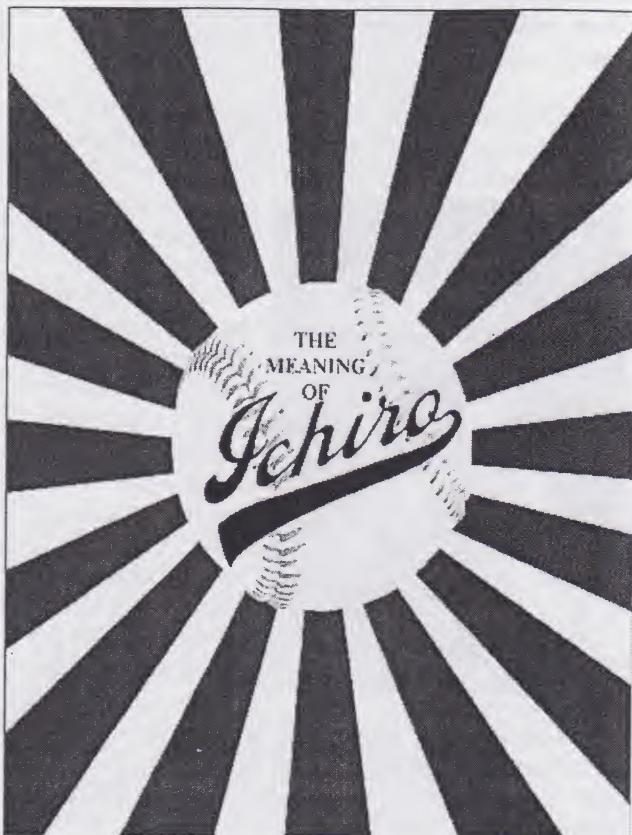
'I like to wing it,' Valentine explained, 'because conditions change from day to day.'

From *The Meaning of Ichiro*

Whiting, the author of this book's non-official predecessor, *You Gotta Have Wa*, and the great *The Chrysanthemum and the Bat*, attempts to do the impossible here in his *Ichiro*: start a revolution without a cause. The book traces the emergence of Japanese players in the majors, looks closely at the historical, and often nasty, relationship between Japanese and American owners, deals with individual histories, and, best, defines the essential differences between American and Japanese baseball. These contrasts are found in preparatory techniques, baseball unions, and in definitions of sacrifice and teamwork. That many of the differences seem to be abstractly philosophical and that many of them seem too far from playing fields, you should still excuse the hyperbolic semantics of his full title. There really hasn't been a "wave" of Asian ballplayers; nor, if there were, would the game be transformed. The meaning of Ichiro will remain hidden for at least another generation.

Parts of the book are excellent, valuable additions to the rich tradition of understanding baseball from the top down: understanding contracts, anti-trust laws, the relationship between unions and management, and the lives of the owners, insightful veins that are mined well. Equally impressive is the longish section on the gifted Seattle outfielder **Ichiro Suzuki** and his history with both his overbearing showbiz dad and the tortuous path through Japanese organized baseball. By the 1990s, Japan and its athletes had become less resentful towards outsiders and cultural influences from abroad; Ichiro, although relentlessly single-minded about hot pursuit of excellence (hours of training, ceaseless repetition of skills, no days off), begins to chaff under "indentured servitude" of the Japanese baseball system.

These sections about the training methods, about the influence of patriarchal nationalism evident at home and in society, and about the changing in Japan styles are well done, with dozens of pertinent quotes from both the participants and journalists. The book's smaller asides surround the spirit of *wa*, and Japan's reliance upon



ROBERT WHITING

Bestselling Author of *You Gotta Have Wa*

"loyalty, cooperation, and trust," a collective harmonious embrace of selflessness. The exact correlation between this groupism's deference to authority and Ichiro's preternatural individual skills is really not discussed, nor is *wa* and the Japanese take on non-articulated employee contracts elaborated when such concepts have no bearing on the many individual players' cases here narrated. In fact, connections are often lost or not taken up: much of the book's second half is taken up with stringing together of the players' bios and American experiences, journalistically and temporally, instead of thematically, and there is no cumulative point. "Player A came and was good for awhile; Player B came here and was a bust." The book could have made clearer the decreasing difficulty for

Asian players, but as it is, there is such paltry evidence. There really has not been a new wave, or a transformation.

Other difficulties arise from more serious problems: the book is breezy and informal, not the tone or style befitting a look at culture. Many of the so-called Japanese traits



unique to that island don't really explain Ichiro's success or Irabu's disappointment. The overthrowing and pitch count alluded to constantly should be analyzed with greater sampling. If gangsters and betting, as well, surround the game, it should be either footnoted or elaborated. There is much repetition of facts, as befitting a book that so often lacks direction. All baseball

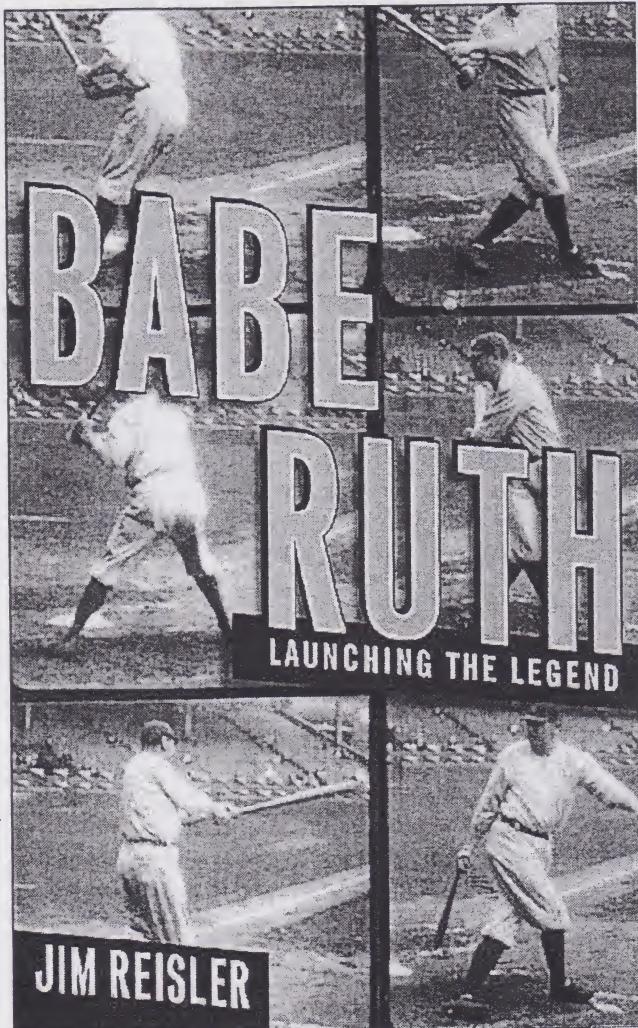
books need players' stats at end; the pictures in the middle do not need the Yankee's Matsui in a staged taxi photo shot. If this is a history where are the pictures of the Japanese greats? Also bewildering are the suppositions regarding whether Japanese majors could play. Bobby Valentine, a constant apologist and blowhard on the subject, suggests yes; the performance of these ten or so players here recently, otherwise.

The book, however, is invaluable as a coda of actual athletic performance to Whiting's *You Gotta Have Wa*; there, many of these points—backward labor dealings; harmony and sacrifice—are elaborated upon. In fact, the entire story is more interesting as a backdrop to Asian-American relations in general since Hiroshima, just not two books' worth. I will never need to see athletes compared to slaves again; I expect in a book of serious aspirations to have a partially annotated bibliography, not the citations listed here, many of which don't match up to the quotations used in the book. I'm not sure, moreover, if Ichiro's success is not partially based upon his father's ridiculous and severe training regimen; if so perhaps abuse of children, mentally and physically, for the reason of a parent's need for glory, should be examined, if not prosecuted. Just let the children play. That would be a transformation of our international pastime.

Babe Ruth: Launching the Legend.
Jim Reisler. McGraw-Hill, 2004.

"You can't describe him, you can't compare him with anybody else. He's Babe Ruth."
Miller Huggins, quoted in *Babe Ruth*

Babe Ruth, braggart, bombastic denizen of brothels, and beer-drinking god, needs to be examined critically with each passing generation, as with **FDR**, **Joe McCarthy**, **Paul Robeson**; how each passing age confronts this athlete of gargantuan skills and appetites will partially be that age's litmus test for morality. In Reisler's biography, *Babe Ruth*, our hero is pigeonholed, as it were, into an uncomfortable twelve-month period of 1920. But what a year! Women's voting, bars' closing, Black Sox's



cheating, and the decade's roaring—and, perhaps most memorably, Babe's taking center stage in the Bronx, building a dynasty, stadium, and tradition, on his feminine legs. In terms of prior Babes, if **Robert Creamer** lionizes the subject in his masterly biography, and if Boston fans vilify, and if Hollywood twice brutalizes, here Reisler schmoozes Babe, acting as his winking, best pal.

But like starfish, Babe Ruth lacked a brain, and if 260 pages of watching a man child and his Id run amok defines your jollies then start here: the book does excellently when running through the season, game by game, but less fortunately when analyzing Babe's relationship to his world. The historical backdrop is well attended, although often not in depth and pointless considering Babe's lack of political engagement; the beleaguered manager's portrayal, Hall of Famer Miller Huggins, is solid; the three-way American League pennant race, eventually won by the Clevelanders, is dramatic and exacting; and the fans' love affair with the Sultan is vividly chronicled. The drama between the Giants' **McGraw** and Yankee management is wonderful, as are the eye-popping mini-narratives of many of Babe's game-transformative clouts, often beyond fence, stadium, and a writer's imagination.

Life for Babe at the Ansonia Hotel where the new decade



and the Yankee fans waited breathlessly for each new feat was too perfect; what was arduous were the players themselves, in the main stolen from Yankee accomplice and witless narcissist, the Red Sox's **Harry Frazee**: a team of misfits, with surly veterans mixed uneasily with raw novitiates, all ready for collapse any given weekend away from home. Solid players were aplenty: **Pipp**, keeping **Gehrig**'s sack warm, centerfielder **Bodie**, and **Peckinpaugh** at short; the hurlers were even keener, if also, obstreperous, harder to handle: pugnacious **Carl Mays**, ancient **Jack Quinn**, and gentlemanly **Bob Shawkey**. In fact, Mays's killing of Cleveland's **Chapman** with a runaway pitch, and his later quarrels with Huggins and management, and Huggins' futile quest

to keep this staff together in September is the real spine of this narrative. By not having Ruth in the post-season, Reisler misses a sense of conflict, urgency, and resolution that would carry the book to less journalistic transparencies and evanescence.

Also missing is a proofreader. One time **Waite Hoyt** is 30 in 1929, but 31 in 1921; as with **Cher**, something is wrong. Also in error are the author's casual disregards for the distinction between *flout/flaunt*; the first is what Babe does with convention, the second also refers to **Cher**. Baseball fans would be surprised to find that **Leo Durocher**, and his paltry 23 extra-base hits in three years, is considered a Yankee great. Nor in a book mostly about men should pronoun antecedence be ever confusing: one dangling *he*, and the logic of a paragraph could collapse. Baseball attendance may have soared in that year, but not to the degree constantly stated: averaging 16,000 did double the total of the year before, but the stadium was still half empty. Even emptier are those seats starting the next year, almost a decade before the Wall Street collapse: Reisler should mention the steady decline, culminating in average crowds of 8,000 a mere five years later. **Yankee Fever?** I doubt it. Equally jarring are asides that detail the influenza as being more devastating than the Black Death, or the rather pointless comparisons between **Harding**'s presidency with **McKinley**'s interrupted reign.

Perhaps because of the need to scrutinize Babe, and of course, America's fascination with power, size, orphans, New York, and cartoonish figures of uncontrollable urges, this should have been a more gripping story. Having baseball writers examine athletics *vis-a-vis* historical epochs, or having novelists wax rhapsodically and ignorantly about the game itself, are bad ideas. This was a swift read, and a good story, but sometimes the chronology is askew, highlighting connections that aren't really there, and sometimes the prose is too "Gee!, Gosh!", as when Babe "saves" the 1920 season and baseball from the 1919 World Series scandal, even if the scandal story broke in late 1920; or how after Chapman's death the Bambino's 43rd home run helped, for earnest Reisler, "[Make] everyone realize that baseball, just baseball, had returned for good." Except for Mrs. Chapman and all of us Yankee haters.

Michael Baker teaches composition at New Jersey colleges, where his students write about their fierce hatred of the New York Yankees.

I Can Pick 'Em...Sorta

I'm like the Swami, Jimmy "The Greek" and Mike

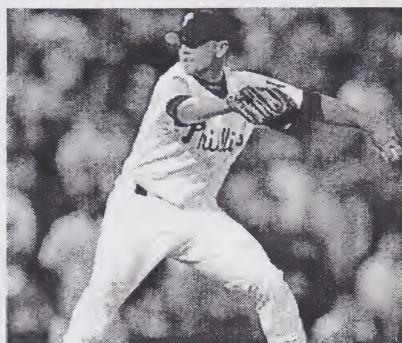


Francesa all rolled into one. I can pick 'em. Well, I can sorta pick 'em. I can pick who will win each and every division, but I'm not always on point with the year. Sometimes I'm off by a year, sometimes more, but I'm

never wrong! I chalk up this uncanny skill to my advanced advance scouting reports, my scary judge of talent, and clairvoyancy. Yet, being wide of the mark each and every year has made me question why I'm so close; maybe my scouts are too detailed, maybe my innate ability to judge talent is overshadowed by my optimism and faith, maybe the vivid dreams I get about box scores and standings are blurred. Or maybe I have no idea what I'm talking about and yet somehow manage to pick the right teams in the wrong year. Whatever the case maybe I'm a sure bet.

Last year, before the start of the season, I picked the Dodgers, Cardinals, Braves, Yankees, Twins and A's, with the Red Sox and Giants winning the wild card. Did anyone predict the Marlins? Anyway, as we all know this didn't happen in '03, but it's close to happening in '04. Eerie!

With the 2004 season coming to a close, the \$64,000 question is this—whom did I pick at the start of this year? Before I unlock the mystery of the future and make you wealthy, be sure to mortgage your house, take out all your life savings, pack for a trip to Vegas, and get ready to live the high life. Here were my thoughts at the beginning of this season:



Out of the NL East next year we have the Phillies. This goes against my fundamental philosophy of picking a team until they get knocked off, but for some reason I thought this year was the Phils

year. I thought the addition of **Billy Wagner** would be the difference. Atlanta's brilliant run comes to an end as

by Jonnie Whoa Oh

the bats go silent and the pitchers don't. **J.D. Drew** will have a big year because that's just what **John Schuerholz** does, gets players with a lot of potential and then lets them fulfill it when they land in Atlanta.

In the NL Central expect the **Astros**. Their pitching is there and they'll have big years from **Pettite, Clemens and Oswalt**. Their offense will be good enough. The **Cubs** will fall apart because of too much emotion the year before but will be the wild card. The **Cardinals** pitching won't be there and their offense will get tired of carrying them.

The **Dodgers** will pull out the NL West because **Gagne** is just dominating and the **Giants** won't be able to hang in there with their lack of offense. The **Padres** will make some noise but are still too young.

I have to retain my fundamental philosophy and pick the **Yankees**. Do I really need to explain why? \$200 million. **Boston** will perennially finish second. I don't expect much from the **Blue Jays, Orioles, or Devil Rays**.

The AL Central will belong to the nearly contracted **Twins**. Their pitching and smart payroll will keep them in it. The **White Sox** will be burned by injury. **Detroit** will be better but not good.

The **A's** will take the AL West because of pitching. The **Angels** signings will help them but they'll still miss the playoffs because **Boston** will be better. **Texas** will be **Texas**, no pitching, a lot of hitting. **Seattle** is too old.

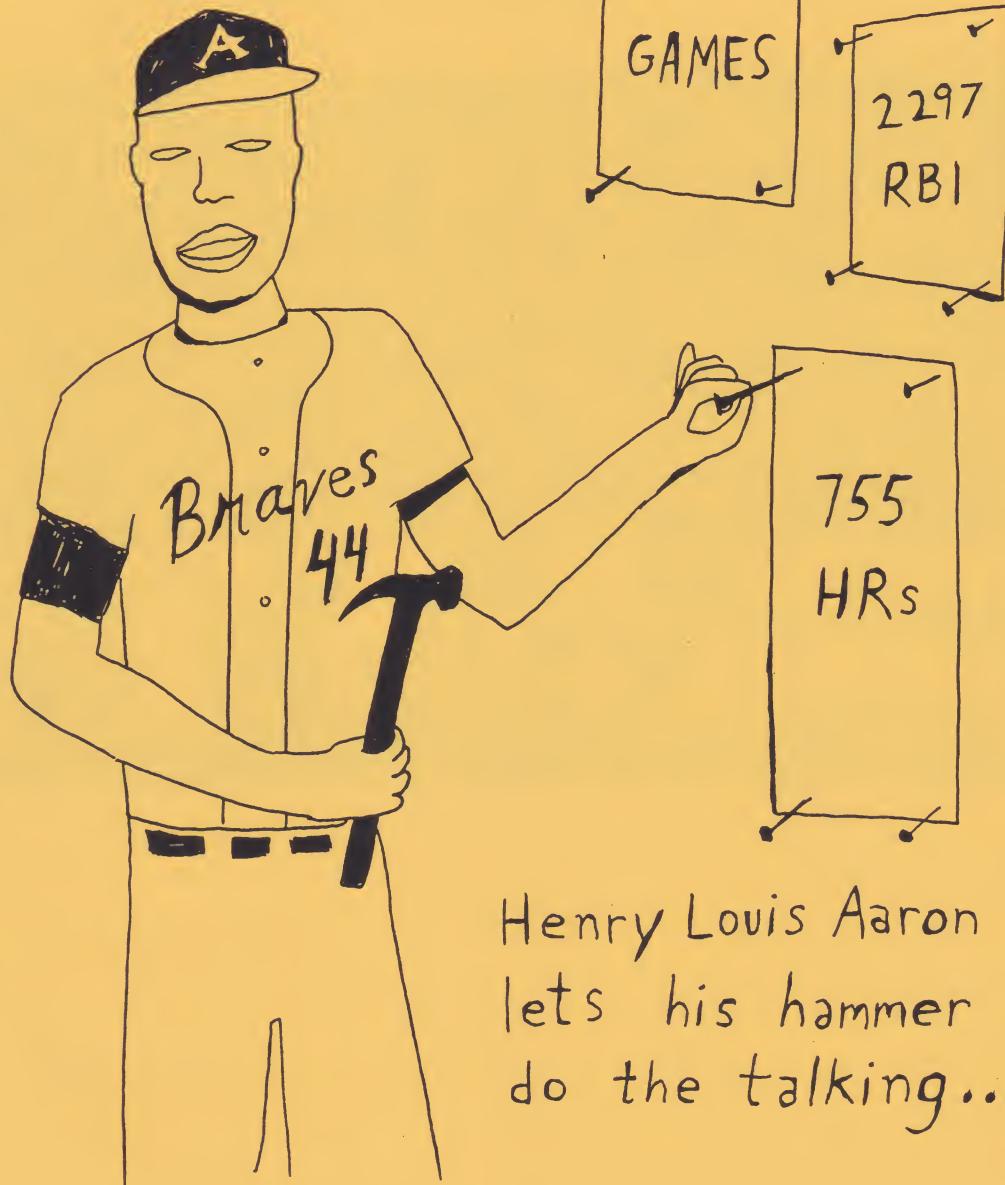
So to recap, betting on the **Phillies, Astros, Dodgers, Cubs, Yankees, Twins, A's and Boston** in 2005 or 2006 or maybe 2011 will make you a lot of money, making you the envy of all your friends and colleagues.

(Author's Note: Dear reader, please keep in mind that the writers here at *Zisk* are paid particularly poorly, so it would be greatly appreciated if you could donate even .01% of your winnings to the "New York Mets Need A Front Office Who Has Actually Watched A Game Of Baseball" fund at www.wedontknowwhatwearedoing.org)

Jonnie Whoa Oh plays shortstop, puts out records, and enjoys 3-2 ball games best.

Hammerin' Hank

by
Slink
Moss



Henry Louis Aaron
lets his hammer
do the talking...

Zisk

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